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Tehran joy . . . An Iranian youth celebrates his country's 2-1 victory over the United States in the World Cup while, below, French police officer Daniel Nivel lies critically injured after being hit by

Hooligans face expulsion from France for life

Jon Henley and John Duncan in Toulouse, and Stuart Millar

EMERGENCY powers to deport known hooligans and ban them from France for life were introduced this week after a day of German rioting that left one policeman in a coma.

The decision, following a meeting between senior British and French security officials, was hailed as a measure of the determination to stamp out the violence that has so far marred the World Cup tournament.

The injured French officer, Daniel Nivel, a 44-year-old father of two, was struck with a metal bar in clashes following Germany's 2-2 draw with Yugoslavia in Lens, northern France. Hospital authorities in Lille said on Monday that they did not expect him to survive.

Germany considered withdrawing from the World Cup, it emerged, as Chancellor Helmut Kohl condemned as a national disgrace the violence by German hooligans. But Fifa, the world football authority, turned down the informal offer.

Regional Prefect Daniel Cadoux said 96 men, mostly Germans, were detained during the trouble and six immediately deported. He said the German hooligans were "for the most part sober", unlike English rioters in Marseille. "They didn't come to support their team," said Mr Cadoux. "They came to smash things up, to attack security forces."

French police believe that the violence in Lens was orchestrated by gangs of well-organised thugs, many with neo-Nazi connections. As many as 450 skinheads were seen on the streets of Lens before and after the match, giving Nazi salutes. Some of those arrested are known to German police as neo-Nazi thugs.

The German Football Federation said that French police ignored written warnings



that thugs banned from every football stadium in Germany were planning to travel to Lens.

The rioting deflected attention from the England fans in Toulouse for Monday's game against Romania, which England lost 2-1 *(Match report, page 31)*.

Jerusalem plan provokes outcry

David Sharrock in Jerusalem and Martin Kettle in Washington

THE Middle East peace process lurched closer to collapse this week when Israel defied Washington and angered Palestinians by backing a plan to extend Jerusalem's borders into the occupied West Bank.

Ignoring American protests, the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, won cabinet approval for the scheme, which Palestinian leaders said amounted to a de facto annexation of territories that were supposed to be subject to final status negotiations between the two sides.

The creation of a "greater Jerusalem" will include the extension of its boundaries westwards to incorporate Israeli commuter towns, with the objective of guaranteeing the city's Jewish majority. ... ele-ment is the proposal to create an "umbrella municipality" over parts of the West Bank beyond the 1967 Green Line to the south, east and north of Jerusalem. Eight Jewish settlements will fall under the city's municipal authority.

Ahmed Tibi, economic adviser to Yasser Arafat, described the Israeli government's decision as "a new attempt to destroy the peace process". He told Israeli radio: "It's a total violation of the Oslo agreement. There is an intention to annex Palestinian-occupied land. Palestinians are being expelled from Jerusalem systematically by cancellation of their identity cards, confiscation of their lands and demolition of their houses."

For months the Palestinians have been urging Washington to take a tougher line with Mr Netanyahu, but the United States secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, has persevered in assembling a package deal that would see Israel withdraw from another 13 per cent of the West Bank in return for security guarantees and the start of final status negotiations.

Last Sunday, after a week of intensive lobbying against the Israeli move, Mrs Albright said she had told Mr Netanyahu in a telephone conversation that "in this very delicate environment, unilateral actions are not the kind that are helpful".

A state department spokesman had earlier called the plan "extremely provocative".

In a press conference aiming to turn back the tide of criticism, Mr Netanyahu said there had been a campaign to distort the Israeli decision. It was "entirely municipal, entirely administrative, with no political implications".

But the European Union voiced its concern, saying the plan would "alter the demographic balance" in the Jerusalem area and "complicate the peace process".

The plan does not annex the West Bank settlements in ... to pay local property taxes and vote in their own jurisdictions, said Mr Netanyahu's adviser, David Bar-Illan.

But it sets up an "umbrella authority", putting the settlements under Jerusalem's municipal authority for certain services, notably building and planning. Settlements normally have to get building approval from the defence ministry.

Hundreds of Israelis in prosperous suburbs west of Jerusalem demonstrated against the plan last Sunday, vowing to take it to the supreme court. Many moved out of Jerusalem to flee the steadily rising influence of the religious community, many members of which do not work or pay taxes. "We are not going to pay for the Haredi [ultra-Orthodox] neighbourhoods in Jerusalem," said one angry resident.

Comment, page 12

Britain cuts gay age of consent to 16

Michael White and Lucy Ward

BRITAIN'S House of Commons voted overwhelmingly this week in favour of lowering the homosexual age of consent from 18 to 16 after ministers assured MPs that they may change employment laws to protect vulnerable young people from the predatory attention of adults of all sexual persuasions.

MPs voted by 336 to 129, a decisive majority of 207, to establish equality before the law for gays and lesbians in Britain and end five centuries of discrimination. But the historic victory was not won without fierce opposition from mainly Conservative traditionalists, who warned fellow MPs that "our duty is to protect the innocent".

Gay activists, some of whom staged a peaceful vigil outside the Palace of Westminster during the debate, hailed an important milestone, which, they predicted, will lead to fairer treatment beyond the conduct of sexual relations, notably in such financial matters as inherited pension rights and tenancies.

Lobbying was far less intense than in 1994. Labour's election victory last May all but assured that the 1994 vote, which saw MPs vote for 18 as a compromise between 16 and 21, would be reversed.

Some of the estimated 1,000 gay activists watched from the public gallery, breaking into applause at the result of the vote.

Encouraged by the churches, the traditionalists put up as fierce opposition as they did four years ago.

At one point, Nicholas Winterton, an arch-opponent, challenged his colleague, Eleanor Laing, one of the Tories to speak out for the change, to justify "unnatural" practices — "one of the main sources of Aids and hepatitis" — in terms of Christian morality.

She did so in terms of "equality before the law" and, amid barracking from her own side, derided suggestions that "young boys have to be protected, when young girls do not".

An attempt to amend the bill to protect minors of both sexes from predatory conduct by people in authority over them, from teachers to carers in children's homes, was more narrowly defeated, by 234 to 194 votes, only after a Home Office minister, Alun Michael, himself a former youth worker, said a government working party was actively considering tightening the law.

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Europe's racism knows no frontiers 24

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Reasons why the right is seeing red

ONE NATION'S exploits in Australia (One Nation gains divide Australia, June 21), and similar successes elsewhere by rightwingers eager to undermine or suppress other people's rights make it essential to understand at least some of the reasons why their policies and ideologies — demonstrably based on fallacies and leading to disaster — appeal to large numbers of voters.

In theory democracies are based on a polarity of government and opposition, with distinct aims and approaches. In practice real opposition is defunct. There is no alternative. The main parties depend on opinion polls for their so-called policies, and on advertising consultants to inject superficial differences into their electoral programmes. All they seem to care about is how best to elbow each other out of the political centre. Communism and socialism, which once challenged the anger of the undertrodden, have practically disappeared. Political fringes (Greens, Democrats, neo-Nazis, etc) derive their newly found legitimacy from taking on the role of substitute oppositions.

Politicians of all ideologies have been unable to solve the ills affecting their peoples. Indeed they have added to them senseless arms races, useless conflicts, ethnic cleansing, waste of natural and human resources, economic rationalism and failures they have pandered to their voters' worst fears (of the Evil Empire, the Bomb, the Yellow Peril, Popery, Muslim fundamentalism, etc).

An appeal to the followers of Pauline Hanson and her ilk to abandon their prejudices and rejoin the centre-right's fold can therefore hardly succeed both because prejudice has been for so long the staple of political propaganda and because John Howard's incompetent government has not seriously tackled any of the issues they raise.

It's easy for the self-righteous left, on the other hand, to despise Hanson and her horde of rednecks in Queensland without bothering to understand that their targets (multiculturalism, immigration, the Aborigines) are only mythological projections of very real fears. The fears are no less real because they are misguided, and to dismiss them without doing something about their root causes (unemployment, poverty, defective public health, crime) is facile and irresponsible.

Finally, those who stupidly disparage Hanson as a deranged fishwife fail to understand the sex-appeal of female leaders in a world sick of misused male power.

(Prof) Giovanni Carsaniga,
University of Sydney, Australia

YOUR report on the influence of Australia's One Nation party on the outcome of the Queensland state election (Howard scorns "deranged" Hanson, June 14) was very distressing.

Having lived in Queensland all my life and now temporarily living [illegible] I find it disturbing to [illegible] enough support behind the shallow, xenophobic Pauline Hanson and her party for them to claim nine seats out of an 89-seat parliament.

This former fish-and-chip shop owner espouses views plagiarised from texts such as Mein Kampf. A programme to limit immigration, relax gun laws, cut funding to the arts, Aborigines and other minorities, and re-introduce capital punishment will not solve the problems facing Queensland, or Australia.

The existence, and apparent strength, of this party will fan the flames of racism, anti-Semitism and hatred, will polarise views, and could lead to the destruction of Australia's psyche, the strength of which has been multi-culturalism.

Jason Steinberg,
London

Getting to the truth

KUDOS to Catherine Bennett on her analysis of the new wave of relativism sweeping Britain's presses (Buying the truth, May 31). "In a diverse world," she quotes the Independent newspaper as urging, "we must tolerate different systems of trial and incarceration." In agreement with Ms Bennett, I'd just like to point out the logical consequence of such a position, which is that we are obliged to adopt a wholesale policy of non-intervention. Since each community has the right to attend to its own domestic affairs in the way it sees fit, no other community has the right to judge it, still less to take action against it.

Thus it was only proper that we stood by and watched while tribes massacred one another in Rwanda; proper that we let the Chinese authorities imprison or open fire on its dissidents; improper that we in[illegible] conflict, and improper that we ever imposed sanctions on South Africa.

The last example points up the fundamental flaw of all relativism of this type. Such relativism assumes that every culture is homogeneous: that Chinese students, for instance, acknowledge the correctness of their own imprisonment for expressing their beliefs; that thieves in states under Islamic law are content to suffer mutilation; or that black South Africans were themselves complicit in the apartheid regime.

When we nobly allow that "their ways are not ours", we are forgetting to ask whose ways we mean exactly. To identify an entire culture with its ruling authority is not tolerance, it is nothing other than capitulation to the will of the strongest.

Joshua Landy,
Stanford University, California, USA

Where small is beautiful

JIM HUDSON (May 31) is perfectly correct in his analysis of the aid situation in Africa — except for the cheap jibe at "big aid organisations [who are] too busy chasing after fashionable 'epidemics' and famines".

I first came into contact with the work of Oxfam in the 1960s in Malawi, and it seemed to me that their small-scale projects involving unpaid volunteers on the ground were among the few worthwhile aid schemes in the country. More recently I have visited Oxfam projects in Uttar Pradesh, one of the poorest states in India, and I can assure Hudson that the aid contributed is being effectively used in a range of small projects that are already being copied in other areas of the state where Oxfam has no representation. Again, the workers on the ground are all Indian nationals.

Sure, I could quote from personal experience a string of Food and Agricultural Organisation aid projects that were a monumental waste of money and, like Hudson, I am inclined to be suspicious of the big, Pergau-dam type plans. But let's not automatically associate big aid associations with wasting aid on big schemes of dubious value.

Bob Kirk,
Fontcouverte, France

GERMANY and Japan are holding out against debt cancellation plans (May 24). Yet it was these two nations that received massive benefit from post-war reconstruction and investment. It is they who should be leading the G8 nations in organising debt relief, not stifling the initiatives put forward in Birmingham. Surely it is now their turn to show mercy.

D and C Crawford Mecanhelas,
Maputo, Mozambique

England expects better behaviour

AS AN expatriate living in California I am continually embarrassed by the behaviour of English football supporters and the negative connotations this breeds for Britain (Hooligans ruin England's World Cup, June 21). In 1994 I was impressed by the lack of violence during the United States-hosted tournament. It was obvious that England's failure to qualify helped to [illegible] World Cup. But with sickening predictability England's first match against Tunisia in France was accompanied by the usual round of organised warfare that has long been a disturbing trapping of our efforts in Europe.

Americans are bemused by our thuggish antics, in stark contrast to the family atmosphere of most sporting events in the US. As an avid soccer supporter himself, Tony Blair must feel the world's collective glare as we progress through the tournament. Until we can eliminate and control the beer-sodden minority, we should send our team, and *only* our team to Europe. Why should French authorities have to take draconian measures to control the mob from across the Channel?

Jon Graves,
Palo Alto, California, USA

THE utterly predictable behaviour of utterly English football supporters in Marseille, contrary to your editorial (English football's rotten core, June 21), point not to the rot at the heart of English football, but to the rot at the heart of England.

Viewed from abroad, England is a country where arrogance and xenophobia mix equally with the long-avoided realisation that England is a mediocre nation. Here is a basic recipe for dissonance and anger. Add in pervasive racism. Mix in the class system, fourth-rate schools, run-down housing projects, a mediocre health service and a managerial class that has gutted the country.

There is an unwillingness and an inability to state one's mind; a crippling fear of being different. This is not new. But without Empire and war, rape and pillage to distract us, the smell from our cherished national characteristics is getting rank. The dysfunction is being noticed by the neighbours — the last thing an English person wants.

(Dr) C Perraton Mountford,
Biddulph, Staffordshire

Briefly

AS ONE of the Britons who evacuated Eritrea on June 7, I read David Hirst's article (June 21) with particular interest. The new Eritrean currency is called the Nafka not because that town saw the greatest single victory by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front over the forces of the Ethiopian Dergue but because it symbolises the survival of the Eritrean will for independence. It is in this town that the EPLF held its wartime and post-war congresses. Those whom the EPLF fought in the 30 years' war of liberation are not those who now govern Ethiopia. It is, therefore, surely inappropriate to describe the choice of the name of the currency as "hardly tactful".

Janet Gruber,
Cambridge

OF WHAT possible value are polls that seek the opinions of the ignorant (June 7)? Only 14 per cent of the UK population are currently Internet users, but presumably the Which? Online survey interviewed a cross-section of the public, 86 per cent of whom have no direct knowledge of the Internet, merely a wide range of fears and suspicions. In these circumstances, it would be dangerous indeed to base any government policy on the empty statistic that "72 per cent" are supposedly in favour of regulating something they know nothing about.

(Dr) Mandy Bath,
Johnson's Landing, BC, Canada

BMI might better be interpreted as Basically Misleading Index as it places too much emphasis on body weight (June 14). Muscle is denser than fat, so that a heavyweight boxer has the same BMI as an obese "couch potato" of the same weight and height.

For this reason experts prefer the Body Composition Index, which takes body fat and muscle mass into account. A recent study conducted in the United States showed that dieting, which will probably be the natural public reaction to the new BMI classifications, usually results in the loss of muscle mass, thereby reducing the body's ability to burn fat. Hence the common yo-yo effect known and hated by dieters the world over. Use of BCI instead of BMI will not render fat into muscle, but at least it enables the problem to be measured sensibly and appropriate action to be taken.

Tracey Runciman,
Hamburg, Germany

WHEN are we going to be shown the real honours list (June 13) — those who were offered a bauble, but turned it down?

Nicholas Blackstock,
Bradford, W Yorkshire

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Colombia's president-elect, Andres Pastrana, celebrates his victory in Bogotá. He has promised radical reform PHOTO: JOSE MIGUEL GOMEZ

Colombians put their faith in change

Jeremy Lennard in Bogotá

ANDRES PASTRANA has been elected Colombia's new president, four years after tearfully admitting defeat to the current leader, Ernesto Samper.

Mr Pastrana, who alleged that Mr Samper had won with the help of a $7 million donation from the Cali cocaine cartel, this time attracted support from across the political spectrum for his Conservative party campaign run under the banner of the Grand Alliance for Change. He polled 50.6 per cent of the vote last Sunday, defeating the candidate of the ruling Liberal party, Horacio Serpa, who took 46.5 per cent.

Mr Pastrana, who takes up office on August 7, promised political reforms, economic regeneration and an end to the country's 34-year civil war. "Today's result is a victory for all Colombians," he said. "Tomorrow the fight begins for reconciliation, for reconstruction, and for peace."

Mr Pastrana's win ends 12 years of Liberal party rule in Colombia. It also represents a cry for change from a Colombian public which, under a weak and discredited president, has suffered worsening internal conflict and economic hardship.

Mr Serpa served as interior minister and Mr Samper's loyal companion throughout his scandal-[illegible] Serpa's support as Liberal rebels, business leaders and even the author Gabriel García Márquez lined up behind Mr Pastrana.

But for many of the Colombians calling for change, the result was a compromise. "We voted for change in the first round on May 31 and we were left with the traditional option of the establishment left or right," said Carmen Rios, a voter. "I voted for Pastrana, but only for lack of any other option."

In the first ballot the independent challenger Noemi Sanin stood against the two main parties and polled 30 per cent of the vote — a sharp rebuke to the mainstream parties. She won in the major cities, and both second-round candidates were aware that her 2.8 million supporters would decide the contest.

Ms Sanin did not say which way she would vote, but the majority of her followers pledged to honour the spirit of the independent vote.

Ms Sanin, who still carries considerable political weight, insisted that actions, not words, would win her co-operation. "Both campaigns were characterised by negative accusations, generalised promises and lack of clarity. We will work with Pastrana only if it is for the good of all Colombians."

The turnout was unusually high. The promise of radical reform and an end to decades of power-sharing between the major parties lured out 60 per cent of the electorate, placing great hope and responsibility on Mr Pastrana's shoulders.

The new president, whose policies will be debated by a congress dominated by Liberal opponents, has promised radical social investment and tax cuts to stimulate the ailing economy. In his victory speech he [illegible] good of the country, and warned of turbulent times ahead.

Apart from having to deal with entrenched establishment interests and powerful armed factions, Mr Pastrana faces other serious problems. The civil war has left Colombia with an internal refugee population of more than 1 million. Health and education services are crumbling, and the country's international image as a drug producer with a poor record on human rights needs serious repair.

War looms in Horn of Africa after peace proposal fails

David Gough in Addis Ababa and David Hirst in Asmara

THE Horn of Africa was braced this week for bloody conflict as the four-week-old peace process between Ethiopia and Eritrea was declared dead.

Salim Ahmed Salim, general secretary of the Organisation of African Unity, said last week that his delegation had been unable to make headway because Eritrea was still refusing to accept the four-point peace proposal produced by the United States and Rwanda.

At the conclusion of two days of shuttle democracy between the capital cities of Addis Ababa and Asmara, Mr Salim said: "Ethiopia reiterated its agreement to the proposals . . . but Eritrea stated clearly that the facilitation process was over."

The two countries have been at loggerheads since May 12, when Eritrea invaded hundreds of square kilometres of northern Ethiopia that it claims. The Eritreans say they have no intention of withdrawing. Ethiopia says it will never negotiate with Eritrea while the disputed land is occupied.

The OAU has called on Eritrea to withdraw its forces but it appears unlikely that Asmara will agree to talks with a pre-condition that it has previously rejected.

Ethiopia has engaged in a mass mobilisation of military resources with thousands of regular and militia forces being bussed to the front line. The talk in northern Ethiopia is of impending war.

Asmara's rejection of the US-Rwanda proposal means that all-out war between two of Africa's poorest countries looks certain.

Eritrea's president, Isaias Afewerki, accused the Ethiopian government of violating last week's US-brokered agreement under which both sides must refrain from using air power.

He said that the Ethiopian foreign minister had "made it clear that they are not abiding by it, and today we have reports from airlines that they need to report to Addis Ababa before commercial flights enter Eritrean air space."

Western diplomatic sources in Addis Ababa said Ethiopian hawks in prime minister Meles Zenawi's ruling party were gaining the upper hand.

Iran power struggle hots up as minister forced out

Jim Muir in Tehran

THE political struggle in Iran intensified sharply last Sunday when the reformist president, Mohammed Khatami, lost a senior minister to an impeachment motion in the conservative-dominated parliament.

But within hours, Mr Khatami hit back by appointing the deposed interior minister, Abdullah Nouri, as his vice-president for development and social affairs. It was the closest that the mild-mannered, non-confrontational Mr Khatami has come to a direct collision with the hard-liners since he took office last August.

The impeachment of Mr Nouri, which was carried in parliament by 137 votes to 117, was seen by moderates as a frontal attack on Mr Khatami's reformist policies.

The president said that while he supported parliament's right to scrutinise and impeach ministers, Mr Nouri had his full support and was implementing his policies.

Mr Nouri was one of two key ministers in the cabinet. His job was to spearhead the president's plans to implement political liberalisation.

The other key minister, Ataollah Mohajerani, in charge of culture and Islamic guidance, is overseeing Mr Khatami's drive for social and cultural freedoms, a pillar of the concept of a civil society that was central to his phenomenal election victory in May last year.

With the reformist mayor of Tehran, Gholamhossein Karbaschi, charged with corruption by the conservative-dominated judiciary, and Mr Nouri hit by the hard-liners, moderates fear that Mr Mohajerani may be targeted next.

As vice-president, Mr Nouri will not be required to appear before parliament for approval, as ministers must. But he will have an automatic seat in the cabinet and will oversee the president's plans for Iran's future.

● The United States has made its clearest overture yet to Iran on building a new relationship, offering to explore confidence-building steps with its old enemy. The secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, said Washington could see the prospect of a "very different relationship" even though Tehran continued to pursue policies to which it strongly objected.

Washington Post, page 13

The Week

PRESIDENT Clinton nominated Richard Holbrooke as the new US envoy to the United Nations. If confirmed by the Senate, Mr Holbrooke, aged 57, will succeed Bill Richardson, who is to become energy secretary. Mr Holbrooke was due to meet Slobodan Milosevic on Tuesday to tell the Yugoslav president that he must comply with the demands of the major powers, which include a pull-back of troops in Kosovo.

Comment, page 12

THE United States Senate has stubbed out landmark anti-smoking legislation, handing a big victory to cigarette makers and stamping on public health campaigners' hopes for a comprehensive national tobacco policy.

Washington Post, page 13

A SPLIT has occurred in France's Gaullist RPR party over proposals to open talks with the racist National Front about the introduction of "national preference", a euphemism for legal discrimination against the country's 4 million immigrants.

Le Monde, page 19

SOUTH Korea captured a suspected North Ko[illegible] up the vessel.

CANCER cases went up six-fold in part of southern Iraq after the 1990-91 Gulf war, according to a United Nations document based on Iraqi government figures. The document did not suggest a cause for the big increase.

AFGHANISTAN'S fundamentalist rulers closed more than 100 private schools that had been quietly educating thousands of girls in defiance of government plans for a hardline Islamic state.

BURUNDI'S warring political factions, the Tutsi-led government and Hutu rebels, agreed to a truce and a second round of peace talks beginning next month.

TWO dangerous members of the Neopolitan Mafia, Ferdinando Cesarano and Guiseppe Autorino, escaped from court through a tunnel that had been dug by accomplices under the defendants' cage.

JONATHAN Norman, a 31-year-old unemployed body builder, was sentenced to 25 years to life at Santa Monica, California, after being convicted of stalking the Hollywood director Steven Spielberg with intent to rape him.

AUTHOR Carlos Castaneda, who pioneered the New Age movement with stories about a Mexican sorcerer called Don Juan, has died in Los Angeles. He was believed to be 72.

Russia in nuclear deal with India

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

INDIA gave thanks for an old friend this week after Russia defied international outrage at New Delhi's nuclear test explosions and agreed to supply it with two reactors.

The deal, which was sealed last Sunday, came only 10 days after Russia and the other G8 leading industrialised countries agreed at their summit in Birmingham not to export technology that could be used in the weapons programmes of India or Pakistan.

It makes Russia the first foreign supplier of nuclear technology to India for more than 20 years. The United States and Canada, which built India's earliest nuclear reactors in the 1960s, ended co-operation after New Delhi's first test explosion in 1974.

"India is delighted at this move because it is a signal of what the Indian government would like to portray, and that is, 'we are not alone in the world any more'," one diplomat said.

New Delhi-based diplomats from the other G8 countries were uncertain whether the deal, valued at about $3.5 billion in 1995, was a technical breach of sanctions. [illegible] visit to India last weekend of Russia's atomic energy minister, Yevgeny Adamov. But the diplomats argued that the supply of the two reactors to a power station at Kudankulam, in southern Tamil Nadu state, was contrary to the spirit of the G8 summit resolution condemning last month's nuclear tests by India and Pakistan.

"The timing raises all kinds of questions, given all the attention on nuclear issues," another diplomat said. However, Russia, which has also supplied reactors to Iran, has been anxious to sell its technology abroad.

Indian officials were openly delighted. They insisted that the deal was not covered by sanctions because it was originally agreed in 1988, and because the power station would be subject to International Atomic Energy Association safeguards. The officials also believed it was not covered by more stringent "full scope" safeguards agreed in 1992.

V Ashok, a spokesman for India's Atomic Energy Commission, said: "This deal predates sanctions, or any other commitment that Russia might have chosen to make afterwards. It just so happens that the finalisation took a great deal of time because the Soviet Union collapsed, and an entirely new finance package had to be worked out."

But the US condemned Russia's decision to supply India. "This is not good news," said the state department spokesman, James Rubin. "It's the wrong message at the wrong time, and we are going to urge the Russians to reconsider."

The sale would harm interna[illegible] bring rewards", he added.

The deal also signals a resumption of co-operation between New Delhi and Moscow, India's main arms supplier before the Soviet Union collapsed. Last week a high-ranking Indian military delegation was in Russia looking at a range of defence equipment, including fighter planes and air defence systems.



Conrad Schumann, the soldier pictured escaping to West Berlin in 1961, two days after East Germany started building the Berlin Wall, has committed suicide at his home in Bavaria, aged 56 PHOTO: PETER LEIBING

US ambassador reins in world criminal court

THE United States last week imposed strict limits on the role of a planned international criminal court, [illegible] could enable any tyrant to block his own prosecution, *writes Ian Black*.

Bill Richardson, the US ambassador to the United Nations, told delegates to a Rome conference negotiating the establishment of the court that only the UN Security Council or a state — and not the prosecutor — could have the authority to trigger prosecutions for genocide and crimes against humanity.

The court, which is likely to sit in [illegible] powers and would step in only if national judiciaries were unwilling or unable to act.

But the court, intended to avoid the need for *ad hoc* tribunals such as those dealing with Bosnia and Rwanda, is dividing those who want a free and independent institution and those who insist on subordinating it to national governments.

The US position is sharply at odds with Britain, Canada, and most members of the European Union, which want the court to be independent from the Security Council and its prosecutor to have powers to initiate cases across a wide range of crimes.

Richard Dicker, associate counsel of the US-based group Human Rights Watch, said it was "shameful that Washington continues to leave open the possibility that any tyrant can block his own prosecution".

Havel to be kingmaker as Czechs swing left

Ian Traynor in Prague

THE Czech president, Vaclav Havel, was thrust into the role of kingmaker last weekend after voters in a general election made the Social Democrats the strongest party for the first time in modern Czech history but returned a hung parliament.

Voters in the two-day poll crowned Milos Zeman's Social Democrats as the comfortable winner with 32.3 per cent of the vote. It gave him a sweet victory over his arch-rival, former prime minister, Vaclav Klaus, whose Civic Democratic party could only manage to win 27.7 per cent support.

But a deal between the two men is unlikely and the chances of a stable majority coalition being formed are slim. There will now be weeks of haggling, with the onus on President Havel to help make the country governable.

Since the "velvet revolution" of 1989, the Czech Republic has been the most stable country in post-communist Europe. But the elections confirmed that those days are gone, ushering in a period of fragile government, shaky coalitions, and growing public anxiety.

Mr Havel, who is recovering from 18 months of acute illness, has courted controversy by playing an uncharacteristically interventionist role in Czech politics over the past six months. He is now expected to invite the rival party leaders to open talks on a coalition, which will probably include at least three parties.

The Social Democratic victory marked a watershed in the Czech Republic because it was the first time since the democratic era began in 1989 that voters preferred the centre-left to the centre-right.

The result was to the president's liking. In a veiled but unmistakable recommendation to the electorate last week he advised people against voting for Mr Klaus, who was the post-communist world's longest serving prime minister until toppled in a party corruption scandal last November. Since then the country has been run by a caretaker government under the former central banker, Josef Tosovsky.

Mr Havel is constitutionally empowered to name a prime minister-designate and ask him or her to try to form a government. He is expected to offer that job to Mr Zeman. However, the president said last week that he did not have to offer the job to the leader of the strongest party and also intimated that Mr Zeman might not want the job.

The Social Democrats won 74 seats in the 200-seat parliament. A coalition with the Christian Democrats, who claimed 20 seats, and the rightist liberals of the Freedom Union (19 seats) would muster a sufficient majority.

But while the Christian Democrats have declared themselves willing coalition partners with the Social Democrats, the Freedom Union, a breakaway faction from Mr Klaus's party, will require considerable courting.

Mr Klaus's enthusiastic espousal of free markets "without ifs and buts" degenerated into a corrupt, unregulated free-for-all after eight years in power.

Mr Zeman has pledged to slow down privatisation, regulate the markets, keep key utilities under state control, and engage in deficit spending. He has also toyed with the idea of a swingeing millionaires' tax. He has suggested scrutinising the books of those boasting fortunes of more than $3 million and requiring them to prove that their wealth was acquired cleanly.

Although Mr Zeman has ruled out a deal with the communists, who took 24 seats, he could try to establish a more left-leaning coalition with the communists' tacit parliamentary support. But such a move would make it almost impossible for the Christian Democrats or Freedom Union to join a Zeman government.

The elections came two years early and few pundits expect the new parliament to last a full four-year term.

Diplomats leave Belarus

Tom Whitehouse in Moscow

THE dispute between Belarus and the West worsened on Monday when the ambassadors from Britain, Germany, the United States, Japan, France, Greece and Italy returned home in protest against the former Soviet republic's closure of their residences.

Their Belarussian counterparts in the West are expected to be sent packing in a tit-for-tat measure.

But diplomatic relations have not broken down completely: in a parting gesture, the British ambassador, Jessica Pearce, joined her French, German, Greek and Italian colleagues in a champagne toast "to an early return". Ms Pearce said they hoped their departure would not worsen relations further.

The authorities in the Belarussian capital, Minsk, were unabashed. "The foreign ministry considers there were no grounds to turn this action into a political incident, and views the political pressure and ultimatums directed at Belarus as unacceptable," it said.

If President Alexander Lukashenko reopens their residences, the ambassadors are expected to return.

The recall of the envoys follows a three-month dispute with the president regarding a luxury compound on the outskirts of Minsk, which is home to most of the diplomatic community. The president has his private residence there and does not want his view spoilt by foreign flags.

He told the diplomats to leave, claiming that emergency plumbing repairs needed to be done. When they complained of a severe breach of diplomatic protocol, he appeared to relent before losing patience and blocking all entrances to the compound last week.

Ms Pearce said: "The point of us leaving is to show him he cannot treat us in the way that he expects to be able to treat anyone in his country."

Since he was elected three years ago, Mr Lukashenko has persecuted the nationalist opposition and shown blatant disregard for civil rights. He has ignored strong criticism from European Union governments and the US on a number of incidents, including the shooting down of a hot air balloon carrying two Americans, the extension of his term of office by referendum, and public praise for Hitler.

The country has little external debt with the West, and can ignore its criticisms. But it relies on Russian gas and oil.

Rebels step up Ugandan terror raids

Anna Borzello in Kichwamba

DAVID BUGIYRE, aged 24, lay in his hospital bed and spoke through lips swollen with pus and blood. "They smashed in the windows, poured in petrol and set our dormitories alight," he said.

Mr Bugiyre is one of nine students in hospital after an attack this month by rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) on the Kichwamba Technical Institute. He is lucky to have escaped with his life: at least 45 people died in the raid. More than 110 young men are still missing, believed abducted or killed.

The attack is the worst by the ADF, who have been trying since November 1996 to overthrow Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni. The rebels are a coalition of an Islamist sect, known as Tabliqs, and fighters from a previously defunct group, the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda. They are supported by Rwandan ex-government militia and soldiers who were loyal to the late former Zairean president, Mobutu Sese Seko.

The rebels used to operate out of eastern Zaire, but when the forces of the current president, Laurent Kabila, seized power, renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo, the ADF moved to the Ruwenzori mountains, which straddle the border with Uganda.

Mr Museveni proclaimed the rebel threat dead, but the ADF resurfaced last July with an attack on a western town, and have since launched further raids, displacing more than 100,000 people. They have also established an urban terrorist wing.

The army has blamed the rebels' resilience on the mountainous terrain and the continued support of the Sudanese government. Mr Museveni — who backed Mr Kabila's bid for power — had also counted on Congo's new government to secure the border region and cut off the rebels' arms supply.

But Mr Kabila has not made this his priority, and Ugandan rebels continue to operate freely, trading arms with Rwandan rebels further down the border. The situation came to a head last month when Congo lashed out at Uganda, accusing Mr Museveni of interfering in its internal affairs.

Despite these problems, western Ugandans — who voted overwhelmingly for Mr Museveni in the 1996 elections — have given the government the benefit of the doubt. But the attack on Kichwamba has been a turning point. During the raid, the troops guarding the institute fled.

Mr Museveni knows he cannot afford to lose the support of a region rich in agriculture, minerals and tourist potential. He has promised compensation to the survivors and disciplinary action against the soldiers.

However, many Ugandans are beginning to ask whether the army has the capacity to bring the fighting to an end. The ADF is one of three rebel groups fighting the government, and there are increasing calls to resolve the conflict through negotiation.

Swiss banks' offer 'is robbery'

Mark Tran in New York

SWITZERLAND'S three largest banks last week offered to pay no more than $600 million to settle claims from Holocaust survivors who have accused the banks of misappropriating assets of account holders sent to death camps.

The announcement by Crédit Suisse, Swiss Bank, and Union Bank of Switzerland, marked the first time the banks have mentioned a figure for a possible settlement, but it was immediately condemned by Jewish groups.

The banks said the $600 million included about $70 million they had already paid into a humanitarian fund set up by Swiss banks, the central bank and private businesses last year to aid needy Holocaust victims.

The offer does not include repayments to Holocaust victims or their heirs from dormant wartime accounts in Swiss banks that an independent auditing team headed by a former United States central banker, Paul Volcker, is hunting, the banks said.

"By all legitimate criteria, this is a fair offer. The banks view this offer to be at the upper limit of what can be justified," the three banks said in a joint statement.

Abraham Burg, the head of the Jewish Agency in Israel, said the offer was "robbery and an evil deed". "The three banks . . . hid the stolen property for years and now are trying to earn interest," he said. Michael Kahan, the senior vice-president of the American Jewish Congress, added: "This is probably going to be unacceptable, given all the interest that has accrued since the 1930s."

In March the Swiss banks agreed in principle to an out-of-court settlement of $20 billion class-action lawsuits in the US. The settlement was due to be completed this month. In response to recent reports that some lawyers were demanding more than $1 billion in the settlement, the banks warned they "would not entertain unfounded and excessive demands for payments".

The Credit Suisse chairman, Rainer Gut, said the banks had gone public with their offer "because there has been so much speculation, so many leaks and semi-leaks". But the World Jewish Congress in New York, one of the groups involved in the search for a settlement, expressed its dismay. It said the Swiss declaration was a "dramatic violation of the confidentiality agreement" by the banks.

The settlement talks began in April under the auspices of the United States under-secretary of state, Stuart Eizenstat, and headed off threats of a boycott of Swiss banks in the US, particularly in New York. Both the Swiss government and the Swiss central bank have refused so far to join settlement talks.

Motown sings blues as jobs head south

US DIARY
Martin Kettle

YOU do not need to talk to members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local Number 659 in Flint, Michigan, to know what underlies their strike against General Motors, which has entered its third week.

All you need to do is read the large notice in the car park behind their union offices, which has become the strike headquarters.

"The parking of any foreign-made autos on Local 659 property is absolutely prohibited," the notice reads. "Violators will have their autos towed at their own expense."

For these General Motors workers, foreign-made cars are the nightmare that they believe GM wants to foist on American consumers. This will in turn make American car workers redundant, further depleting the already much-reduced GM workforce at its Michigan headquarters and bringing community life in Flint, one of the classic one-industry, one-company towns of industrial America, to its knees.

"We know what they're doing," said Norm McComb, as he tried to organise the increasingly entren- [illegible] vans, and the strike is crippling GM's United States operation. "We know that they're building plants in Mexico and that some of the vehicles they are manufacturing there are being shipped back here."

Out on the Bristol Road picket line, the striking car workers looked more like people enjoying a beach holiday than militants in the front line of the US's most serious industrial conflict of 1998.

In hot sunshine they sat on beach chairs under parasols wearing T-shirts and shorts, waving to passing motorists who beeped their horns in support as they headed off down the freeway towards Detroit. There are plenty of women on the picket line, and children too. This is also a multiracial strike.

But the pickets shared Mr McComb's view of what this dispute is about. "They want to take our jobs and ship them down to Mexico," said one. "They think they can monkey with us," said another, "but we won't let them destroy our jobs and our town."

The Flint strike began at the end of May, when, according to the union, GM management began using non-union contractors to shift machinery out of the metal-fabricating plant over a holiday weekend and install it in a separate plant in Mansfield, Ohio.

On June 5, the 3,400 workers walked out and accused GM of breaking its agreements. Although there have been intermittent talks since, both sides say there has been no progress in resolving the dispute.

Two weeks ago, 6,000 workers at a plant on the other side of Flint walked out too, shutting down the supply of vital components for a range of GM vehicles and hastening [illegible]

At the last count, 80,000 GM workers in up to 60 plants were idle, and workers as far afield as Alabama and New Jersey had been sent home. Industry watchers said last weekend that GM was close to a nationwide closure.

If that were to happen, up to 178,000 workers could be locked out or on strike, including, ironically, workers at the company's Canadian and Mexican plants. The cost of the strike so far is put at $200 million, but if the whole company is shut down, then losses will mount to $1 billion for every two weeks it lasts.



On the cards . . . Car workers picket outside a General Motors plant in Flint PHOTOGRAPH: PAUL WARNER

Prospects of an early end to the strike are clouded by two other factors. Last weekend the UAW gathered in Las Vegas for its triennial union convention. All the union's leaders, including its chief GM negotiator, Richard Shoemaker, were in Nevada rather than talking to management back in Michigan.

Second, the company is about to shut down for its summer vacation [illegible] may not get much of a holiday, with most of them having to exist on $150-a-week strike pay from the union, but the shutdown makes a settlement unlikely until the second week of July at the earliest.

This is an odd time for a major industrial dispute to break out in the US. In spite of the upbeat mood among American trade unions following the 1997 UPS delivery strike, which ended in a major victory for the Teamsters Union, strikes are running at a low level, largely thanks to the strong economy.

In the car industry in particular, conditions for skilled workers remain excellent. Most shopfloor workers, a UAW source admitted, take home more than $50,000 a year, and many skilled workers at GM get closer to $80,000, with good overtime deals. There are long queues for any vacancies.

As a result, industry analysts believe that the dispute may not spread beyond GM very quickly. The Flint strike, they say, can only be explained by the history of bad [illegible]

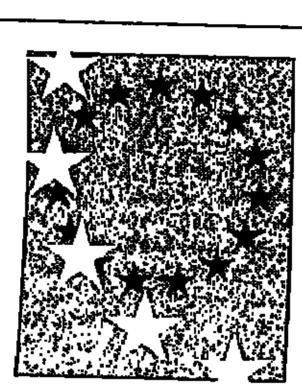
GM has not managed change as effectively as its competitors. When Ford and Chrysler stopped building production plants, GM kept on. The company now has excess capacity, with too many workers working at less than full stretch, though the union says this is because of poor investment in machinery.

But even union sources accept that more jobs must go. Over the past 20 years GM has shed 20,000 workers in Flint alone. Management recently announced that Buick City, where one of its lines is manufactured, will shut in 1999 with the loss of another 2,800 jobs. By 2000 it is possible that GM will have shed an additional 11,000 Flint car workers. Change on that scale would be a civic catastrophe. The town has never had easy industrial relations. Now there is a sense of desperation.

"Labour relations at General Motors have always been much more contentious than at Ford or Chrysler," said Doug Fraser, the Glasgow-born former national president of the UAW, who now teaches [illegible] relations in Detroit. "Maybe it's the sheer bigness of the company, but the workers just do not trust General Motors."

All of which is exacerbated in a one-company town such as Flint. "Everything is more intense," said Fraser. "It's a place with a lot of history. And the mood is full of insecurity. They know that the big Buick plant is going to close next year. There is a widespread fear of the future in Flint. It's a very emotional thing."

Blair deflates the federalist balloon



Europe this week

Martin Walker

CARDIFF: Tony Blair wrapped up Britain's 1998 European summit and the six-month term of the UK presidency last week with the confident claim of "a transformation in our relations with Europe".

"Europe has moved. There's a significant change that is happening," he said, in reference to the joint letter from Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Jacques Chirac which stressed that "it cannot be the goal of European policy to establish a central Europe state".

"There are developments here in line with British thinking, but not just British. The pressure for change has come from individual European countries."

The sentiments amounted to an unwritten Treaty of Cardiff: that Britain would drop the alternating rhetoric of being Eurosceptic or self-styled Euro leader, while the Europeans would embrace both Britain's aversion to a centralised Euro state and move closer towards its free-market approach to economic reform.

That comes close to endorsement of the Blairite search for a common "Third Way" ideology which European socialist parties last week agreed to pursue. In the short term it will push for ward reforms to liberalise tax policies, encourage entrepreneurs and sweep away impediments to job creation, improve skills training and create a flexible labour force. The European social model now has a distinct Anglo-Saxon flavour.

Margaret Thatcher would have enjoyed the Cardiff summit. So would Charles de Gaulle. Those twin advocates of a Europe of nation states jealously guarding their traditional grandeur and their constitutional prerogatives against the federalist tide could claim to have won the argument.

A mass conversion seems to have taken place among Europe's heads of government. They all now preach "subsidiarity" — clawing back the decision-making power from Brussels to national and local levels.

The gathering majority behind the proposal for a new European super-council of deputy prime ministers, to give the political weight and legitimacy of nation states to the work of the European institutions in Brussels, signals the degree to which the member states — especially the smaller ones — want to keep Brussels in its place.

And yet there are contradictions here. The idea of a super-council of deputy PMs raises more questions than it answers. There is a clear tendency for those personally engaged in Europe to go native — just consider successive British politicians who have gone to Brussels to become commissioners. There is also a prospect, which will not have been lost on prime ministers, that deputies entrusted with such European authority could become formidable alternative sources of power and even political rivals.

Moreover this renewed sense of national authority follows the most decisive act of integration the EU has so far undertaken: the surrender by 11 nations (so far) of their sovereignty over all monetary and much economic authority to the unelected European Central Bank. And the final declaration from the Cardiff summit offered new responsibilities to the European Commission, to develop a "scoreboard" to assess progress to complete the EU's single market, to monitor both the national action plans to create jobs and stimulate the growth of small firms, and to police "improper" price differences across the EU single market.

Europe's leaders agreed to meet again in an informal session in Austria in October. There they may be able to agree what kind of Europe they wish to see, and they will doubtless come up hard against the fact that the Kohl-Chirac concept of "subsidiarity" is very different from Blair's.

For Kohl and Chirac it is essentially a defensive ploy, to protect big German corporations and French banks from the attentions of the EU commissioner for competition, Karel Van Miert.

But free-market and competitive rulings are exactly what Blair wants to see from Brussels. And his concept of a decentralised European future echoes the devolution strategy he has brought to Scotland, Wales and, in its own special way, Northern Ireland.

"There are areas where we can co-operate and even integrate more closely — fighting crime and unemployment, the environment and foreign policy," he said at Cardiff. "We have to work out the balance between the areas where we integrate, the areas where the nation states act, and the areas where the regions or the nations within a particular country interact".

What this means is that Blair, whose prime objective is to ensure that he holds power for at least two terms, has a clear sense of where he wants Europe to be a decade from now. From his warm support of the single currency, he evidently assumes that his prime ministerial salary will by then be paid in euros.

He also assumes that by then the Poles, Czechs and Hungarians, and the Maltese and the Swiss, will have created a Europe of at least 20 members. The Common Agricultural Policy will be no more, and the EU and North America will have established a free trade zone. Wales and Scotland will be self-governing nations looking as much to Brussels as to Westminster.

In this Blairite vision it does not much matter if Kohl and Chirac have a different sense of Europe's future. They will by then be out of power. Blair, however, will be a still-ambitious man of 55. The job of Mr Europe, which by then should include much wider influence over foreign policy, could beckon tantalisingly from Brussels.

Dancing under the empire's shadow

Jonathan Fenby reports on life in Hong Kong under 'one country two systems'

DENG XIAOPING wasn't so wrong after all. As the paramount leader predicted — in words that shocked some of the more literal-minded democrats of Hong Kong — racehorses still run and people still dance.

His most celebrated phrase has come true: the colony Britain handed back a year ago is now part of one country, but the world's most populous nation operates two systems — one for the 1.2 billion people of the mainland and another for the 6 million who have now lived for a year as inhabitants of the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

Neither the people of Hong Kong nor the wider world seem to have realised what an extraordinary situation this has produced. Being able to bet on the horses is an activity the people of Hong Kong greatly prize — and some also cherish their right to boogie in the clubs of Wan Chai or foxtrot across a more sedate hotel ballroom.

Last week we drank the night away with the finest clarets brought here by the château-owners of Bordeaux, and this week we will sup with officials from the empire in the North. Hong Kong is a supple place, a bamboo that never breaks. It is also unique — in ways that those [illegible] who knew better a year ago never came close to guessing.

So take three other examples that speak volumes about the way things have gone since the handover last July.

In May, Hong Kong had legislative elections. The polling arrangements were badly skewed to the disadvantage of pro-democracy candidates. The turnout was unexpectedly high — at 53 per cent it was double pollsters' predictions. The democrats won 70 per cent support and 20 seats. The main pro-Beijing party increased its share of the vote from 15 to 25 per cent. The elections were followed by a rush of populist blood to the heads of even pro-business politicians. The next elections are in two years' time. Politicians are already jockeying for favour from the voters, and all the strong voices are coming from the opposition.

Therein lies the second point of note. Hong Kong has never had an elected government. So it does not have a government party. If it did, there would be few ambitious politicians joining it now.

Criticising the administration of the chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, is the flavour of the month. In Hong Kong, unlike Britain, nobody wants to get on Tung's bandwagon.

A year or so ago Tung's popularity on entering office exceeded that of the outgoing governor, Chris Patten, and rivalled Tony Blair's. Now it is respectable by international standards, but floundering in a society where respondents have always shown deference answering pollsters' questions.

When he was riding high, Tung could get away with some clunking opinions. One was that the annual candle-lit vigil to commemorate the dead of Tiananmen Square should be consigned to history. Taking no notice of him, 40,000 people turned out in Victoria Park on June 4 and newspapers blazoned it across their front pages.

All of this may seem normal — a democratic electoral sweep, strong criticism of a government buffeted by everything from the Asian economic crisis to bird flu, a commemoration of the massacre — but it is happening on the soil of the last major power in the world run by a communist party.

A [illegible] minister told me that if what was done in Hong Kong remained within its laws there would be no problem. Whatever you think of them, the men in Beijing have stuck to their word — and in the process discomforted those who see a Red Guard lurking behind each sharp-suited, mobile telephone-carrying man from the North.

It can be argued that Beijing does not need to intervene overtly. Certainly, it has enough friends to make sure things go its way. But so far that way has left Hong Kong a striking degree of latitude.

Despite the rolling-back of democracy, with two-thirds of the new legislature being chosen by generally conservative groups, the people have asserted their will to go on living as before, with the help of the civil society that surrounds them and which they sustain.

It wasn't meant to be this way. Twelve months ago the world's media were forecasting that this city would see Chinese tanks in the streets, a muzzled press, a rush of emigrants cashing in on the Canadian or Australian passports they had prudently acquired, Bill Clinton and Blair issuing stern calls for Beijing to live up to its obligations, demonstrators and democrats in jail.

Telephoning me last August, a British magazine editor began by saying: "Not expelled yet?" More frenetic democrats were said to be teaching their children how to cook pot noodles so they shouldn't starve when mummy or daddy was clapped in jail.

On the other hand, business would be great. All those businessmen from the North would need offices and flats, so property prices would boom beyond their already ridiculous heights. Chinese companies after international finance would make Hong Kong the greatest corporate flotation centre ever seen. Mainland money would pour into the stock market and send the index to levels never seen before.



The People's Liberation Army stand guard outside the Prince of Wales barracks PHOTO: MARK RALSTON

Canny friends announced that they would be out of Hong Kong for the summer — not because of fear of the People's Liberation Army, but because they would be able to rent out their flats to mainlanders for the equivalent of a five-star hotel on the French Riviera [illegible] proved so wrong. The press has, if anything, grown more strident, and the most successful newspaper is known for its critical line towards Beijing. Far from an outward rush, immigration has risen. London and Washington have borne out the scepticism aroused when John Major promised that Britain would never allow Hong Kong to walk alone — and probably just as well.

Hong Kong has shown a considerable ability to look after itself. Nobody has been shut up in prison for their political beliefs.

THE government's defence of the fixed link between the Hong Kong and United States currencies has protected the territory while other Asian currencies have been ravaged — particularly as the Hong Kong dollar, unlike the Chinese yuan, is fully convertible.

The reserves are among the highest in the world and, even if there is pressure for a deficit budget, this is still a model of small government.

Still, people are deeply worried. For a while, Hong Kong thought it could ride out the economic collapse in Southeast Asia. We are different, businessmen would say: our fundamentals are strong, all we need is to believe in ourselves.

To begin with they were right, but the depth and breadth of the crisis spared nobody, however good their fundamentals, however adroit they had been in moving their manufacturing to cheap-labour plants in China, however many millions they had made from a well-timed property acquisition.

A year ago the Hang Seng stock exchange index stood at 14,307. On Friday last week, it closed at 8,676. Property prices are down 40 per cent. Unemployment has hit the high level, for Hong Kong, of 4 per cent.

The inflow of businessmen, companies and cash from mainland China has not materialised: Beijing has imposed draconian controls, and officials in the capital complain that it is much harder to get to Hong Kong now than it was before the handover.

For the first time in a [illegible]

Hong Kong has had two other major economic downturns. This time, it is quantitively worse and qualitatively different. In the past, as one leading businessman remarked the other day, those who suffered were the rich and poor.

This time the middle class is in the firing line. They have over-invested in property and shares. They have taken out mortgages and overdrafts that are rendered crippling by the high interest rates that the defence of the dollar peg has brought.

They have not lost their view of themselves as special people, which I believe contributed powerfully to the high election turnout in May. They voted to assert their identity not as Chinese, but as Hong Kong Chinese. The nuance is all. A poll issued last weekend showed that 45 per cent thought the development of Hong Kong would have been better under Britain than under China, while 20 per cent saw no difference between the two, and only 10 per cent thought things would have got worse under continuing British rule.

When it comes to the economy, "we are stronger than them", a Hong Kong woman said to me recently, reviewing the state of Southeast Asia. Stronger than what? Indonesia in chaos; Malaysia fighting to remain the odd man out in the International Monetary Fund's world; Thailand fishing the financial bottom?

Hong Kong's destiny is not down South. It is up North with China. This has always been a Chinese city. Chris Patten's greatest mistake was not to recognise what that meant in reality.

At midnight on June 30 last year, the city became the Special Administrative Region. It isn't perfect. But it is alive and kicking against all odds. — *The Observer*

Jonathan Fenby is editor of the South China Morning Post

Fresh crisis, page 18

Brethren with their minds set on booty

ALBANIA DIARY
Helena Smith

HE IS king of the roads. And in high Albania you quickly know it. Kalashnikov cocked, swagger in his hips, beer on his breath, the Albanian bandit is merciless. "Money or ya life," he screams at the relief workers and camera crews who come his way. And, with religious predictability, they delve into their pockets.

But now the highwaymen, drunk on lawlessness and months of gun rule, have started to turn on their own. The arrival of thousands of "wealthy" ethnic Albanians from Kosovo has enriched their hunting ground.

Last week I witnessed an assault on a family of Kosovans who had just fled the fighting. Their mini-bus stood gutted and stripped. Trembling with fear, the group of men, women and children stood in a state of near-nakedness next to it.

"Dirty boys, dirty boys," shrieked my driver, reversing our battered Mercedes at high speed. "Dirty boys, dirty boys," shrieked the interpreter [illegible] their motherland a savage place. Four decades of ruthless Stalinist rule has placed their bloodbrothers in a different world from the one that they know. The refugees have been crossing the border into the poorest part of Europe's poorest country, weary and wide-eyed. Though many have relatives in the highlands, few have visited them and few now want to stay.

As they take in the wretched wasteland that is the former People's Socialist Republic — the filth, the children playing around open sewers — more and more have begun to ask if this is the Greater Albania of their dreams. "We only eat weeds in boiled water here," says Shkurte, a teenager whose family hid in the forest for weeks before crossing the frontier. "There is not a minute in a day when we don't want to go back to Kosovo."

The highlanders would love to see their rocky mountains united with the fertile plains of Kosovo below. "That way lies our future," said one freedom fighter, recalling 1913, when the modern state of Albania was recognised at the London Peace Conference. "We are one people divided by an invisible wall unfairly constructed by the Great Powers."

But Albania itself is partitioned, with southerners loathing their hot-headed, gun-smuggling compatriots in the north. For them, Kosovo is a distant problem and one they would rather forget. "When communism fell it took us two weeks to realise that Kosovars were not our people," says Frrok Cupi, who heads the country's official news agency. "Drugs, prostitution, deceit . . . all came down from Kosovo."

Kosovo may well ignite all-out war. But whatever happens in this benighted corner of a benighted land, the real victims will be the thousands of refugees who are fast discovering they have no place to call home.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Prince reveals himself as an ordinary 16-year-old

PRINCE WILLIAM, next-but-one heir to the throne, celebrated his 16th birthday last weekend. This inspired St James's Palace to shovel out a mass of information about him in spite of the professed wish of his father, Prince Charles, that he should be protected from undue media scrutiny at least until he has finished his education.

The prince — still at Eton — seems a personable and agreeable young man with normal interests such as sport, reading adventure books, playing computer games and watching action films at the cinema. He says he finds it difficult to deal with the kind of teenage female adulation which greeted him on his recent visit to Canada.

This mind-numbing stuff was clearly an attempt to stop reporters from asking more personal and intrusive questions, such as whether he has a girlfriend. A special "birthday supplement" published by a Sunday newspaper a week earlier, which explained how the prince arranges dates with the sisters and friends of his Eton classmates, attracted the censure of Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission.

The commission has drawn up a [redacted] been broadly observed, though details about his private life are proving harder to control. His official royal duties are unlikely to start until he has graduated but when William's first girlfriend is discovered, as inevitably she will be, the gentlemanly consensus among editors will almost certainly collapse.

THE VOTERS of Northern Ireland were this week electing the new, power-sharing assembly they were offered in the Good Friday peace agreement. But far from bringing an end to the province's troubles, however, the assembly is just another step in the protracted "peace process".

The run-up to Thursday's voting not only emphasised the continuing tensions between the political parties in the province but created new ones between the parties at Westminster, where the approach has hitherto been consistently bipartisan.

The differences hinge mainly on the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, particularly the huge stocks thought to be held by the IRA. Do the weapons have to be handed over before terrorist prisoners are released, or before the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, can be represented on the executive of the new assembly? The Conservative leader, William Hague, accused the Government of saying "Yes" on one occasion and "No" on another.

Confusion also reigned in the ranks of Ulster Unionist MPs over the release of prisoners, some voting one way and some another. The IRA and Sinn Fein, meanwhile, have had little to say about weapons decommissioning, though unofficially the suggestion is that weapons might be voluntarily handed over as other aspects of the deal — early prisoner release, police reform and action on human rights — take place.

The show is, at least, still on the road, and that must be comfort enough for those who have campaigned to get it this far.

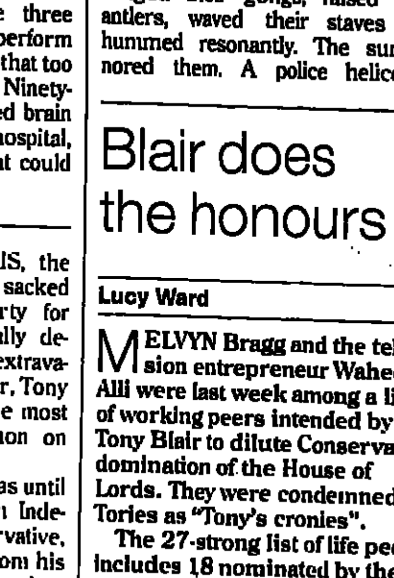
THE HEALTH Secretary, Frank Dobson, announced a public inquiry into the deaths of 29 children who had heart surgery at Bristol Royal Infirmary as three doctors who treated them were found guilty of serious professional misconduct.

Two of the doctors were struck off the medical register by the [redacted] punishment will not materially affect any of them: the two struck-off doctors have retired on full pensions and their colleague gave up children's surgery three years ago.

There were angry scenes and shouts of "murderers" at the GMC hearing, which found the three guilty of continuing to perform surgery in spite of warnings that too many babies were dying. Ninety-five children died or suffered brain treatment at the Bristol hospital, which faces legal claims that could total £20 million.

PETER TEMPLE-MORRIS, the veteran MP who was sacked from the Conservative party for defiance over Europe, finally defected to Labour with the extravagant claim that his new leader, Tony Blair, was "without doubt the most exciting political phenomenon on the European political stage".

Mr Temple-Morris, who has until now described himself as an Independent One-Nation Conservative, said he would stand down from his Leominster seat at the next election. He brushed aside Conservative demands that he should resign and submit to a byelection immediately.





Druids await the first rays of the sun at Stonehenge with staves and raised antlers PHOTO: NICK COBBING

Grey haze puts spell on summer solstice

IT WAS not looking good at 4.52am on June 21 at Stonehenge, *writes John Vidal*. The very moment the sun was meant to rise over the Heel Stone and flood the giant sarsens and boulders in a pure mid-summer light, a deep grey haze shrouded all Wiltshire.

"Hail Ye Oh Sun," cried Rollo [redacted] oak ceremony in the centre of the pock-marked, lichen-covered stones. The 60 pagans, druids, witches and earth warriors invited by English Heritage to witness the summer solstice for the first time in 10 years banged their gongs, raised their antlers, waved their staves and hummed resonantly. The sun ignored them. A police helicopter droned, TV cameras whirred and a semicircle of security guards stared out into the half light watching for trouble. Still the sun wouldn't play.

But if it missed its grand entrance ("It does so regularly," regretted an English Heritage spokeswoman) a cross-section of gaudy Britain was determined not to be left out of one [redacted]

Dressed in wolf skins, wreathed in flowers, robed in green and white and clutching swords and staves, a bizarre group formed a circle in the centre of the stones, courtesy of a police escort.

Unseen by the celebrants, but not by some of the 500 members of the ancient order of HM Constabulary standing around in clumps like tumuli, something was stirring in the long grass on the other side of the road from the stones.

A small group of uninvited ones had crawled in through the undergrowth and were now chanting their unofficial welcome to the solstice. But the police looked on amiably.

Outside the circle, two black witches from the Temple of the Children of Lilith stalked around. To the devil goes the best lines: "We're more on the dark side. We prefer winter and the night, but this will do nicely," said John from Southend.

It was all too much for Matthew, an apprentice druid. "This is a load of bollocks, isn't it? It's performance art. If you want to see serious druidry, go north where there's far less dressing up and showing off."

Blair does the honours

Lucy Ward

MELVYN Bragg and the television entrepreneur Waheed Alli were last week among a list of working peers intended by Tony Blair to dilute Conservative domination of the House of Lords. They were condemned by Tories as "Tony's cronies".

The 27-strong list of life peers includes 18 nominated by the Prime Minister, together with five Tories — among them the former Chancellor and ardent Eurosceptic Norman Lamont — and four Liberal Democrats.

Labour's nominees, drawn from business, public affairs and the trade unions as well as the Labour movement, included party donors and members of the close Blair circle. There was a peerage for outgoing party general secretary Tom Sawyer, Northern Foods chairman Christopher Haskins and political consultant Mary Goudie, a fundraiser and behind-the-scenes party fixer in the lead-up to the 1997 election.

Reform of the Lords will start with a bill next autumn to abolish the voting rights of hereditary peers. But the Government has yet to decide on the second stage.

Riot case against asylum seekers falls to pieces

Alan Travis

THE case against eight West African asylum seekers accused of taking part in a riot at the Group 4-run Campsfield House detention centre, near Oxford, last summer collapsed last week as evidence from the private security guards proved unreliable.

Despite calling more than 20 eye-witnesses, the prosecution conceded defeat after it was unable to clearly establish the identity of the rioters. Videotape evidence from 32 security cameras in the detention centre repeatedly contradicted evidence given by witnesses.

The trial had been expected to last nine weeks and its collapse after only three weeks is an embarrassment to Group 4 and the Home Office. The charges carried sentences of up to 10 years.

The charges against one of the defendants, a 17-year-old, were dropped as he was too mentally ill to continue to stand trial and is now being treated in hospital. Three of the remaining eight defendants walked free. Two of them have already been granted asylum. The five others were taken back to detention while their asylum cases are considered.

During the course of the trial, the jury had heard one Group 4 guard in charge of a riot squad deny he held a detainee by the neck while he was being removed to prison, yet videotape evidence clearly showed this was the case.

Another Group 4 officer claimed he had been concussed after one of the defendants had thrown solvent over him, yet the video showed him five minutes later walking about in good health in a dry shirt.

The prosecution told the jury that the riot in August last year started when detainees believed two of their colleagues had been strangled and killed by Group 4 officers.

Jennifer Monahan adds: A United Nations human rights watchdog is seeking to visit Campsfield House where a mass hunger strike was expected to begin this week.

British policy on detaining asylum-seekers without charge, trial or judicial oversight has come under the scrutiny of the UN Working Party on Arbitrary Detention. Only one other European country — Hungary — is on their list.

In the wake of the collapse of the trial, the Campsfield Nine Defence Campaign and the Campaign to Close Campsfield have called for disciplinary action for perjury to be taken against Group 4 witnesses and a chief immigration officer.

In Brief

BRITAIN has taken a leading role as the clean man of Europe by agreeing a legally binding cut of 12.5 per cent in greenhouse gas emissions in order to secure an EU-wide average cut of 8 per cent.

PREGNANT women and breast-feeding mothers should not eat peanut products if family members suffer allergies such as asthma, eczema or hay fever, the Government warned.

GIRLS arrive in primary schools with a much stronger grasp than boys of the alphabet, numbers and every other aspect of early learning, the Government's curriculum advisers reported.

Washington Post, page 15

THE National Health Service will run out of doctors by 2010 if drastic action is not taken to recruit and train at least 1,000 more medical students a year, the British Medical Association warned.

THE Government faces an estimated £1.5 million compensation bill after six young adults, who risk developing Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease from human growth hormone treatment they received as children, won test cases in the High Court.

TOMMY GRAHAM, MP for Renfrewshire West, faces expulsion after being charged with behaviour damaging to the Labour party. He has been suspended since last summer after allegations of undermining a fellow MP, Gordon McMaster, who committed suicide.

BRITISH law failed to protect a boy with asthma and special needs from injuries by his stepfather, the European Court of Human Rights was told in the first case before it on the rights of parents to use corporal punishment in the home.

THE DIANA, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund will continue indefinitely, its trustees confirmed, despite calls by Earl Spencer for it to be wound up after Diana's image was used for "tacky" merchandising deals.

TWO British soldiers trapped in sub-zero conditions for four days near the summit of Mount McKinley in Alaska, North America's highest peak, are recovering after a dramatic helicopter rescue.

HARRY BARNES, the veteran Labour MP, has insisted that he can carry on as an effective MP without actually talking after he suffered a "slight" stroke that took his voice away.

BENNY GREEN, veteran BBC broadcaster, jazz musician and writer, has died aged 70.

Woodward free after verdict stands

Guardian Reporters

LOUISE WOODWARD, the au pair convicted of killing a nine-month-old boy returned to Britain last week amid intense media interest despite a judge's recommendation that she should not profit from her story.

By 4-3, the supreme court of Massachusetts of last week upheld the trial judge's controversial decision to reduce her original second-degree murder conviction to the manslaughter of Matthew Eappen. The boy's father said that he would launch a wrongful death law suit against Woodward. The seven judges also upheld Judge Hiller Zobel's decision to reduce her original 15-year sentence to the 279 days she had served on remand.

On Monday a poised Woodward said she was "fortunate" to spend only 279 days in jail after being convicted of the killing but continued strongly to protest her innocence.

"I know I did everything I could, that everything I was capable of doing I did," she said on the BBC's Panorama programme, for which she received no payment. "I know that I did nothing to cause it."

She told Martin Bashir — the reporter famous for conducting the Princess Diana interview in 1995 — about the events of February 4 last year. "I lay him on the bed and tried to get some kind of response from him. I waved my hand in front of his face. I clapped, [illegible] and I just, I couldn't get any kind of response from him. So I tried shaking him lightly to try and get him to regain consciousness or to get some kind of reaction from him — and there was none, he was limp."



Louise Woodward protesting her innocence on BBC television

She said the day had never been normal, even early on when she gave Matthew his bath. "Usually it was a fun time, it was a play time," she said. "He cried almost entirely the whole way through — he was really having a tough time with it, so I thought that he was probably tired, and I figured I would get the bath over with as [illegible] did."

She said that when she tried to feed him he had again acted strangely. For two hours afterwards he seemed fine, then he began to get "cranky and upset".

"When I looked into the crib he was just lying there. That's when I realised there was something seriously wrong, because his eyes seemed glassy, they were half-closed, and he seemed to be, he was barely breathing. My first assumption was that he may have choked."

In the interview [illegible] accent and without hesitation. Asked if she was completely confident she had done nothing wrong, she said: "The only thing that was on my conscience was that I may not have done enough, but I know I did everything I could." She said that she had been sure that if she told her side of the story she would be found not guilty.

Britain's Press Complaints Commission said it was up to editors to decide if they should pay Woodward for her story after considering the industry's code of practice.

The code rules out payment to convicted criminals except where "the material concerned ought to be published in the public interest". The Woodwards received £40,000 from the Daily Mail for an interview given to the paper by Louise's parents Gary and Sue last November.

It was the behind the scenes wheeler-dealing that led to the fall-out with her lawyer Elaine Whitfield Sharp.

When she returned home to Elton, near Manchester, on Thursday last week after almost two years as an image — tragic victim or devious villain — she appeared livelier than in the stolid pictures from the trial.

"I feel very sorry for the death of baby Matthew, but like I said time and time I had nothing to do with his death," she told reporters. "I just hope that the medical community will take up my case now that all avenues of appeal are closed, to help prove my innocence."

She insisted she had not received a fair trial because of [illegible]

She said: "The prosecutors are elected in Boston. I think it is purely political. I didn't get my say until the trial and by then it was too late."

Washington Post, page 14
Au pair fears, page 23

Press spared courts gag

Ruaridh Nicoll

FEARS that the press will face privacy controls laid down by judges were allayed on Monday when the Home Secretary announced strict guidelines on the powers of the courts to restrict reporting.

In an amendment to the Human Rights Bill, Jack Straw said that it was important that press freedom was safeguarded.

Under the amendment courts will have to pay "particular regard" to the right to freedom of expression when considering a new right to privacy which will become law when the bill completes its passage through the Commons.

Newspapers and broadcasters were concerned that the bill would leave judges to decide the law on privacy on a case-by-case basis.

The amendment means that Parliament retains much more influence over what judges will be allowed to do.

The Government was concerned that if it did not act it would face a backlash from the press.

Under the amendment any court trying a case involving journalistic, literary or artistic material will have to consider "the public interest" and the relevant privacy code, in most cases the code operated by the Press Complaints Commission.

It strengthens Article 10 of the European Convention, concerning freedom of expression, while still saying that judges must take into account Article 8, the right to privacy.

Mr Straw said: "People deserve protection from unjustified interference in their private life. Our amendment does not sanction that kind of behaviour, but it does safeguard legitimate journalistic activity. We have to strike a balance, and I am confident that we have got it right."

Fury over watchdog's brief

David Hencke

LORD Neill, the senior lawyer appointed by Tony Blair to clean up corruption in public life, has astounded colleagues and angered MPs by taking a lucrative brief to represent Dame Shirley Porter, the former Tory leader of Westminster council, in her fight to overturn a £27 million surcharge for "disgraceful and improper gerrymandering".

MPs were incredulous that a life peer, ennobled by the Prime Minister, should take up Dame Shirley's case while being paid £500 a day to hold an inquiry into party funding.

Andrew Dismore, MP for Hendon and a former leader of the Labour group on Westminster council, said: "I am astounded that Lord Neill has taken Shirley Porter's shilling. There must be a clear conflict of interest between his duties in looking into probity in national and local government and such a high profile case that goes to the heart of probity in local government."

Peter Bradley, Labour MP for the Wrekin, described Lord Neill's decision as "an extraordinary lapse of judgment".

Mr Bradley said: "He must recognise that this is a massive propaganda coup for Dame Shirley Porter . . . . I am not questioning his integrity, but . . . he, above all people, should recognise that it is not sufficient to be free from conflicts of interest. It is crucial that he is seen to be free from those conflicts."

Lord Neill defended the move, claiming that the cab-rank principle, whereby lawyers take the next case in line, meant he had to take the brief.

Trident nuclear warheads to be cut by half

Ian Black and Richard Norton-Taylor

THE Government will attempt next month to revive its concept of an ethical foreign policy and give a lead to the world by unilaterally cutting up to half of Britain's Trident nuclear warheads.

The initiative comes after last month's furore over India and Pakistan's series of tit-for-tat nuclear tests, when the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, promised "ambitious and practical" plans for arms control.

A reduction in the number of warheads has long been a Labour aspiration but has never been expressed before as such a solid commitment and was absent from the party's election manifesto.

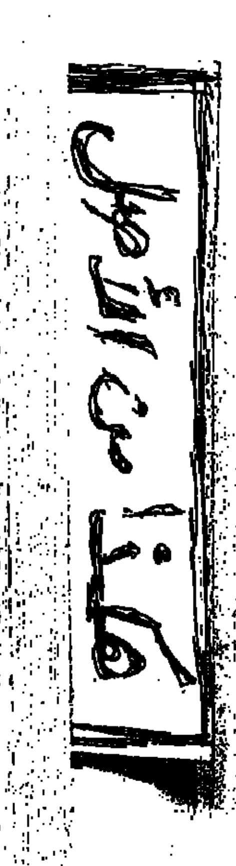
The Foreign Office has been keen to promote its disarmament agenda since the Indian and Pakistani tests brought charges that the five "official" nuclear powers — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — had squandered opportunities after the cold war to make progress on reducing their arsenals.

Mr Cook, once a staunch unilateral disarmer, has been pushing the cuts as proof that Labour is committed to taking a leading role in global reductions, though ministers are also anxious to show they are not exposing Britain's defences to unnecessary risk.

Other elements in the package include changes in the Trident submarine system's alert status — Britain's "deterrence posture" — and what Whitehall calls "greater transparency", disclosing for the first time officially the number of warheads or missiles, and even their explosive power.

The MoD is also understood to have proposed scrapping the order for seven new Trident missiles from the US, a move that would save about £100 million.

A decision to disclose details about Britain's nuclear capability would mark a significant shift in policy given past ministerial statements that maintaining uncertainty is itself a key element of deterrence.



Labour trumpet cautious minimum pay deal

Seumas Milne and Michael White

TONY Blair's cabinet made a virtue of its calculated caution over Britain's first national minimum wage last week after ministers proclaimed the "end of the scandal of poverty pay" for 2 million workers and fended off criticism over watering down the Low Pay Commission's proposals.

While some trade union leaders and leftwingers attacked the "cherry-picking" of the commission's report, surprising figures such as Dennis Skinner rallied to the Government's defence when the president of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, made her historic announcement to the Commons.

To Downing Street's satisfaction, a combative Mrs Beckett put a brave face on her defeat by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, over the details of the new system which will see 18- to 21-year-olds initially get only £3 an hour — and apprentices and 16- to 18-year-olds no guaranteed minimum at all.

A £3.60 hourly rate for adults will come into effect next spring, as the commission wanted, but the Government has decided to stage the youth rate — it will rise to £3.20 in June 2000 — and extend it to cover 21-year-olds.

About 1.4 million part-time women workers, whose pay has [illegible] lieves his interventions have protected his New Deal on jobs and training for young people.



Union leaders said they were disappointed at the changes made to the commission's report, but regarded the legal floor as a historic breakthrough which could be built on. But Bill Morris, leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union, damned the Government's decisions as "an endorsement of workplace poverty". One government source said that the Chancellor had made a "dog's breakfast" of the issue.

[illegible] "gossip circle" which has also put a question mark, almost certainly wrongly, against her ministerial future in Mr Blair's reshuffle.

The Confederation of British Industry offered grudging support while echoing Tory fears that it would mean job losses. Mrs Beckett's Tory shadow, John Redwood, simultaneously denounced the principle of a minimum wage while complaining that Labour had breached its election pledge to introduce "a decent one".

Patrick Wintour adds: The bruising battle between Mr Brown and [illegible] and Industry fights Treasury plans to sell part of the Post Office.

She opposes the proposal to sell a 49 per cent stake in the Post Office, raising about £2 billion. The plan is backed by Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster-General, and by the Downing Street Policy Unit.

Trade ministers, backed by the Communication Workers' Union, oppose even a partial sale, warning that once a minority stake is sold it will be only a small step to full privatisation. They believe the Post Office should be an independent, publicly owned firm, free to raise capital without adding to the public [illegible]

Ministers are to complete a review of options for the Post Office next month, and make a decision in the autumn. Selling a minority stake was included at the last minute at the Treasury's insistence.

Comment, page 12

£3.60 an hour? Bloomin' luxury!

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

IN THE circumstances, Margaret Beckett did rather well. She had lost her great cabinet struggle with Gordon Brown, who sat next to her nodding gravely as she made her statement about the National Minimum Wage.

You expected him to mutter: "Aye, that needed saying. If you wanted to keep your job, that is."

In short, Mrs Beckett was in the position of a Middle East hostage forced to video a confession of her crimes.

"We will begin to end the scandal of poverty pay!" she said, to a shout of "Who's this 'we'?" from Tories.

When she got to the part about the differential — ie, lower — wage for 18-21 year olds (or, "we are mindful of the need to protect the position of young people" as the Government, with its command of the euphemistical paradox, prefers to put it), someone yelled: "Eat all your words and eat them slowly."

The Tories weren't going to let her forget her embarrassment. The Government's approach, she said, was in a "framework of partnership," and they bawled out with laughter at the very idea.

John Redwood replied. The ambitious Tory spokesman doesn't just mix metaphors but puts them into a cement mixer for half an hour. The minimum wage would "throw petrol on the inflationary flames". Pay rises were "fool's gold". This was, he said, "the Mods and Rockers government", and the minimum wage would prove "as effective as go-faster stripes on a scooter".

Mr Redwood charged on, finishing with a flourish: "This is back to the bad old ways, back to the bad old days!", the effect only slightly spoiled by a Labour cry of "And back to your planet!"

Dennis Skinner then baffled everyone by saying that every worker got payments in kind and that tips should not be taken into account when fixing the minimum wage. "Because, if they were, ministers would be in serious trouble."

"I don't have any recollection of being tipped," said Mrs Beckett tartly.

A curious competitive Three Yorkshiremen sketch began. Chris Mullin cited someone in his constituency paid 89p an hour. Chris Pond, formerly of the Low Pay Unit, said that was nothing: he knew of jobs which paid 49p. Mrs Beckett herself had cited 35p an hour.

But how far would they go? "35p? Luxury! Ah've got a constituent who earns 7p an hour!"

"Seven pee? That's good money, that is. We 'ave lawyers earning 1p a day!"

"They get wages? Listen, in my constituency, the heart surgeons 'ave to pay to work. And they 'ave to work through lunch break an' all, and if they want food they 'ave to eat their own thighs..."

Passport stalemate as Bermuda fears British invasion

Ian Black and Lucy Ward

MOVES to grant British citizenship to the inhabitants of Britain's last fragments of empire are in crisis over Home Office demands that the colonies must return the favour by opening their doors to all UK citizens.

In an extraordinary role reversal, affluent dependent territories such as Bermuda and the Cayman Islands are refusing the right to claim British passports on the grounds that granting reciprocal rights could lead to an influx of UK immigrants seeking a new life in the Caribbean.

The Home Office is sticking to the condition even though it is unlikely that any but a handful of the 130,000 residents of the 13 last colonies would seek to settle in Britain.

"They are small islands and have a very high standard of living," said Suzanne Stubbins, UK representative for Bermuda.

"If the whole of the Southeast of England decided they were fed up with the climate here and trotted off to Bermuda that would be horrendous. We don't want to be swamped."

The impasse over citizenship has held up the white paper by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, on the future of Britain's last colonies, due before the end of the parliamentary session, now only weeks away.

"It is totally stuck," said one source. "It needs someone to wade in and force a decision."

Mr Cook indicated in February his desire to restore citizenship rights — lost in 1962 — to the populations of outposts from Pitcairn to the Turks and Caicos Islands. He believes all should have full passports so as not to discriminate against black Caribbeans. Officials say he thought the unconditional rights given to the largely white populations of Gibraltar and the Falklands, both claimed by foreigners, could be replicated.

Currently the 13 last colonies have only British Dependent Territory status, which does not guarantee the right to live and work in the UK.

Lawrence family get Met apology

David Pallister

THE Metropolitan Police commissioner, Sir Paul Condon, last week made an unprecedented apology to the parents of the murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence for failing to bring his killers to justice.

Sir Paul's message of contrition was delivered by assistant commissioner Ian Johnston at the public inquiry into Stephen's racist murder in 1993.

Mr Johnston said: "Mr Lawrence, I wanted to say to you that I am truly sorry that we let you down. On behalf of myself and the commissioner, who specifically asked me to associate himself with these words, and the whole of the Metropolitan police, I offer my sincere and deep apologies to you."

Outside the inquiry Mr Lawrence said: "Whilst we accept the commissioner's apology, we do not forget that Stephen's killers are still free."

He added quietly: "We would like now to have the commissioner here himself... to apologise."

The apology, on the 45th day of the inquiry, spoke of the tragedy of losing a son. It went on: "It has been a tragedy for the Metropolitan police, who have lost the confidence of a significant section of the community for the way we have handled the case... We have tried over the last four years since the first investigation to show imagination and determination to prosecute Stephen's killers.

"I am very, very sorry and very, very sad that we have let you down. Looking back now I can see we could have and should have done better. I deeply regret that we have not put his killers away."

A high court judge later pointedly remarked that the five unconvicted suspects in the murder were not "clamouring to clear their names" as he ordered them to give evidence to the public inquiry but ruled that they could not be asked questions about their guilt or innocence.

"Their rights must be respected," said Lord Justice Simon Brown. But in his ruling rejecting the men's application for a judicial review of the summonses ordering them to appear, the judge made it plain where his sympathies lay.

"If they were innocent they would be clamouring for the chance to proclaim their innocence and clear their names. That is not their position. Their rights must be respected."

When the five men appear before the inquiry next week, it will be the first time they have been required to give evidence about the events surrounding Stephen's death in Eltham, southeast London, in 1993.

The five — David Norris, aged 21, Neil Acourt, aged 22, his brother Jamie Acourt, aged 21, Luke Knight, aged 20, and Gary Dobson, aged 22 — have all at various times been charged with the murder.

Neil Acourt, Dobson and Knight were acquitted at the Old Bailey in 1996. The charges against Jamie Acourt and Norris never came to trial so they remain at risk of prosecution.

If they refuse to answer questions at the inquiry they could be jailed for up to six months for contempt of court. They could also be prosecuted for perjury if it is proved they have told lies.

Battle of the Titans in Downing Street

COMMENT
Andrew Marr

ONE GOVERNMENT, two Prime Ministers? Gordon Brown's crushing defeat of Margaret Beckett over the minimum wage last week has sent another wave of talk through Whitehall about the awesome power of the Chancellor.

The Treasury has always been the rival great power to No 10. Its reach takes it into the detail of the spending departments; its overview of the economy makes it central to strategic thinking. But few modern Chancellors have bulked as large as Brown. To his admirers, Brown has become Labour's de facto leader, a Titan, a politician of genius. Blair may have the title and glittering trappings of admiral; but Brown is captain of the ship, sole master of the quarter-deck. To his enemies, meanwhile, he is a hulking, sulking bully, over-reaching himself and endangering the unity of the crew.

The voyage couldn't have started better. Brown's coup in freeing the Bank of England was brilliant. The first two Budgets were very well received. But the comprehensive spending review has been a bloody process.

Blair himself has confronted his Chancellor about the way in which he has — in another minister's words — "been making mincemeat of colleagues and [illegible] ing them into submission". The really big Treasury moves, such as the Bank of England coup and last week's spending statement, are of course discussed in detail and well in advance. But, however odd it might seem, No 10 is outside the inner Treasury loop.

The grit of mistrust is being dribbled into the machinery of government

Brown works in almost monastic seclusion, with his advisers Ed Balls and Charlie Whelan. It ensures tight secrecy, but officials feel cut out and undervalued — and No 10 isn't sure what is happening next door. Add to this the political effect of the three-year spending deal. This introduces long-termism to departments that could do with it; it ensures that money will go to the priorities; and it avoids some cross-departmental annual battling. But a side effect is that it gives the Chancellor personal power over a wide range of smaller issues, since all changes between now and the next election will become contingency reserve matters.

Meanwhile No 10 is reacting. Traditionally, Downing Street has known relatively little about the detail of other departments, but it now intends to move among departments as vigorously as any team from the Treasury.

Provocatively, the person expected to take control of the next phase of a stronger Cabinet Office-No 10 operation is Peter Mandelson, now Brown's sworn enemy. The grit of mistrust is being dribbled into the machinery of government in a thin, constant stream. The grinding and the smoke can be experienced up and down Whitehall. Ministers gossip and speculate constantly on Brownites and Blairites. One man in the Blair camp guesses that the lack of mutual support reduces the effectiveness of the whole administration by about 20 per cent — an astonishing reflection.

How much are the principals to blame for this? Blair never bad-mouths Brown, at least when outsiders are present, though he listens intently to those who do. Brown has been responsible for some verbal digs about Blair that have been repeated outside his circle. He also fed the now-notorious biography about him by Paul Routledge, which stirred up the old bitterness of the leadership contest.

All of this is small-scale — though debilitating enough — so long as the two are not fundamentally divided on the big questions of politics. But does it go further than this? Are there really distinctive "Brownite" and "Blairite" camps?

There is certainly a profound difference of culture and political style represented by the two men. Brown has lived his entire adult life deep inside the warm, complex tribe that is the Labour party. He knows Labour's levers, instincts, traditions and heroes. He cannot feel entirely at ease at the prospect of the party being modernised away.

Blair, by contrast, would find of this simply baffling. Crucially, Blair does not believe in equality. He is not a social democrat. He has no enthusiasm for organised labour, no sentimental attachment to the post-war settlement. He feels himself to be a different kind of politician, responsive to Middle England rather than Labour Scotland. In his speeches he almost fetishises change and modernity. He is a market radical with decent social instincts. But he's no kind of socialist.

Luckily for Blair and Brown, this difference doesn't yet show up on any crucial issues of economic management. But economics is not the issue. The debate about the future of Labour as sole vessel of power is the place where ambition and political principle collide. It affects the very shape of politics. And if the Blairite-Brownite thing ever turns to war, this is the issue.

There is, in short, a real divide between the two men. Their government remains young, vigorous and astonishingly successful. But it has not yet been properly tested by the pressures of its own success.

Should that success change everything, so that Blair's presidential charisma and feel for non-Labour Britain overtakes the social democratic machine which raised him to his current height? Or do we return to party politics where Brown becomes a conventional Labour Prime Minister, when Britain forgets Blairism?

As Whitehall spends a sultry June waiting for the first Blair reshuffle, a surprising number of people are thinking and talking of little else. — *The Observer*



Jerusalem's walled city

NO ISSUE in the conflict between Israel and the Arabs is as emotive as Jerusalem. It has been held in its entirety by Israel since the 1967 war and the heat generated by the new plan to extend its boundaries radiates far beyond the city limits. Under the plan, the municipality is to annex land to the west — inside Israel's pre-1967 borders — while, more significantly, an expanded "umbrella municipality" is to adopt administrative powers over nearby Jewish towns, including some in the occupied West Bank.

After a chorus of criticism from the United States, the European Union, Palestinians, Egypt and Jordan, the government of Binyamin Netanyahu continued to insist this week that the plan was not political, but intended merely to improve services, attract more investment, tax revenue and industry — and to boost the Jewish population. Palestinians argued, equally forcefully, that it will mean more creeping annexation of West Bank land and alter the status of Jerusalem, both issues that are supposed to be negotiated as part of the final stage of the faltering Oslo peace process.

The Likud government, like its Labour predecessor, has never concealed its position that Jerusalem is Israel's "eternal and indivisible" capital. But to dismiss this latest plan as some narrow municipal issue is disingenuous. True, Oslo deliberately leaves Jerusalem aside, along with other contentious problems like refugees and final borders, but any unilateral action is bound to breach the spirit of the agreement. As so often in the history of the conflict, this row is about creating facts, and specifically about people and land.

The plan was drawn up after a study showed that *Jerusalem's Palestinian community would grow to 45 per cent of the city's population by 2020.* [illegible] Arabs in the new municipal area by 2020, with Palestinians accounting for 180,000 of the city's 630,000 residents.

Jerusalem has changed beyond recognition since the Six Day war. Then Israel unilaterally annexed the eastern, Jordanian-controlled side of the city and expanded its boundaries in three directions, so it already covers large tracts of land that were part of the West Bank. Palestinians also point out that much of West Jerusalem was conquered by Israel in breach of the United Nations partition plan of 1947. Yet if there is ever to be a mutually acceptable partition, the line has to be drawn somewhere. Israel is trying to ensure that it and nobody else determines where that line is.

The UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, representing the EU, stepped into this minefield earlier this year when he visited the settlement site at Har Homa. He was criticised, but in his approach the principle was entirely correct: occupied territory is occupied territory.

Israeli commentators say the new plan would make it easier to link sites such as Har Homa, which closes the ring of Jewish settlements round the city, with others such as Ma'aleh Adumim on the road to Jericho. Palestinian protests that the plan is a municipal ruse are justified. It contains not a shred of the goodwill and compromise that must be achieved between the two peoples who live in Jerusalem. This move should be condemned as another blow to frail hopes that a meaningful peace can be achieved.

A milestone for the poor

THE FIRST and most important thing about last week's minimum wage statement is that it is truly an historic occasion. For the first time in Britain there is a floor beneath which wages are not legally allowed to fall and the same minimum will apply across the country so that cowboy employers can be in no doubt what it is. Two million people will be removed from the worst of poverty wages.

That is a milestone — ethical as much as economic — along the unending road to remove poverty and it ill-deserved some of the disparaging comments from union leaders. Sure, practically everyone — except the usual crop of carping Conservative backbenchers — would like the minimum wage to be higher, but it makes practical sense to introduce it gradually to make sure it doesn't lead to politically unacceptable levels of unemployment, particularly among young people.

A minimum wage of £3.60 an hour must not be seen as an end in itself. It is not a decent living wage, but it should be judged with two things in mind. First, it must be seen against other measures, which would boost the pay of a lone parent with one child to £6 an hour. Second, this is the beginning of an on-going process to be monitored by the Low Pay Commission. If, as we hope, the minimum wage has little effect on unemployment, then the commission should not hesitate to say that the minimum level should be raised.

What is more worrying is whether the Government will accept its future recommendations in view of its reduction of the starting rate for 18- to 20-year-olds from £3.20 to £3 and the extension of it to 21-year-olds. Instead the new rate will be phased in over two years. The Government plausibly argues that it has not rejected the commission's recommendations but merely phased them in so as not to risk worsening youth unemployment at a time when it is launching its welfare-to-work initiative. It points out that it has accepted practically all of the commission's 24 recommendations and that many youngsters are facing increases of up to 50 per cent in their earnings. That's fine, but if the exemptions don't amount to much then why did the Government dilute any of the commission's thorough report, which carved a clear consensus out of the conflicting claims of both sides of industry and the low-pay lobbies?

None of this should obscure the significance of this radical redistribution of income for the poorest paid. However, the poor don't live in a vacuum. They see around them average earnings rising by 5 per cent a year and the fat cats in the boardrooms rewarding themselves with increases that must seem obscene. The Government now has a strategy for minimum pay but not for maximum pay or even for pay in between — unless you happen to work in the public sector where an unacceptably severe incomes policy is in operation. [illegible] sector earnings as the orphan of pay policy. Fairness must be all-embracing.

Mandela steals the show again

WE CONSTANTLY fret about the nature of modern, media-driven celebrity and its less attractive consequences. But Nelson Mandela defies all the rules. At Cardiff Castle last week he seemed to be teaching Welsh children how to sing Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star. Not many people would get away with that. But not many foreign dignitaries could draw 5,000 people to cheer a hero's arrival. "Nelson Steals the Show" declared the Western Mail. Indeed he did, though there is not much competition at a European Union summit.

What is it about Mandela that places him on a pedestal, almost above reproach? His noble nature, and the fact that he both triumphed and forgave those who had imprisoned him for 27 years. More significantly, he also persuaded many of his enemies to admire him. That suggests that low political cunning works in tandem with his noble vision of a world freed from racial hatreds. There is a lot more to Nelson than sainthood.

Mr Mandela was in Cardiff to accept the freedom of the city and to thank Welsh anti-apartheid activists who supported his struggle. He also lunched with the EU summiteers and, doubtless, made them feel better about themselves, as he did with the crowds outside. That is part of his appeal, and he will retire as an unsullied hero in an age that loves to pull heroes down.

In reality the sun does not shine now as brightly as it did for the new South Africa. Radicals at home are disappointed that the Old Man has not tackled the white economic power structures, that change is coming too slowly to prevent renewed upheaval. Radicals abroad complain the fine words from the EU and the United States in 1994 have not yet translated into help — even trade concessions for fruit and wine — on the scale needed to tilt the balance.

This is the harsh version of St Nelson: a titular figure, shorn of real power, a symbol of reassurance to the very forces that imprisoned him. That is premature and certainly condescending. It will not diminish the radiant, reciprocated smiles which greet his final tours. Whatever Mandela's secret is, they should bottle it.

A force for the good of oppressed Kosovo

Jonathan Steele

NATO is facing a dilemma over whether to intervene in the war-torn Serbian province of Kosovo. It knows there is an overwhelming moral and humanitarian case for stepping in to halt the excessive use of force and the unwarranted repression of civilians by Serbian police and Yugoslav troops. It knows that the diplomatic arguments in favour of giving the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, yet more time to clean up his act are weak.

What seems to be holding Nato back, after all the brave talk of the recent weeks, is a combination of two factors. The first is concern over the legal basis of intervention and the difficulty of getting support from the United Nations Security Council in the face of potential Russian and Chinese vetoes.

The second, which comes from the military planners, is doubt over how easy it would be to take on the Yugoslav air force and its defences in the case of Nato air strikes, or the ground forces in the case of Nato airborne landings.

Military planners are bound to be cautious, and similar arguments were heard before the multinational coalition's intervention against Iraq seven years ago. The inventory of the Iraqi forces looked formidable. They had had recent combat experience during the long air and ground war with Iran.

Yet, when faced with the might of Western power, the Iraqi army and air force turned out to be paper tigers. They folded within days. Young conscripts were not ready to die for a cause which they did not fully believe in. The officer corps was less professional than it was thought to be. And of course the technological superiority of the allied forces was vast.

The same factors are even more likely to hold true for the forces of Yugoslavia. They have had no real experience of contested war, let alone of successfully defending positions. In the operations against Croatia in 1991 and 1992 they had the advantage of surprise and superior force.

With war in Kosovo already under way, there are reports of desertions. Several hundred Serbian mothers demonstrated last week to have their conscript sons brought home.

The parliament of Montenegro, the second republic of Yugoslavia after Serbia, has voted to withdraw its conscripts because it cannot support Milosevic's reckless use of force in Kosovo. Faced with air strikes or ground landings, the chances are that the Yugoslav forces would crumble.

The more difficult issue is the legality of outside intervention. Under chapter six of the UN charter foreign powers can move in when an individual state's actions threaten regional peace and security. A strong argument can be made to justify this, as Britain has been trying to do with the resolution it is canvassing before the Security Council. This calls for "all necessary measures" to be taken against Yugoslavia.

Will Russia and China accept it? A key reason Moscow objects is its lingering anger over the decision to exclude Russia from equal partnership in Europe's post-cold war security set-up by expanding Nato. Those in the West who argued against Nato's expansion now have further evidence to support the warnings they gave before it happened. The Russians would inevitably see it as directed against them.

But the milk has been spilt and life must go on. One way round Russia's objections to action in Kosovo could be to stop describing the operation as a Nato force. The British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, has taken the moral and political lead in pressing for intervention, with the vital support of Tony Blair. France, too, seems firmly of the view that only superior force will stop the humanitarian disaster caused by the Yugoslav strategy of relying on force to crush the Kosovo Albanians' aspirations.

Why not, therefore, create a European Intervention Force, an *ad hoc* coalition of the kind which fought in the Gulf rather than a full Nato operation? It would need United States participation, whether in terms of logistics, aircraft, satellite intelligence, and the loan of command-and-control facilities. But it would be clearly under joint Anglo-French command.

Its legal and political mandate could derive from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which is formally linked to the UN as a regional assembly of Eurasian states. No one has a formal veto in the OSCE and the Russians are full members of it, unlike with Nato. Indeed, the Russians have been trying to build up the OSCE's security role, and this could be a chance for them to strengthen it.

WHAT is certain is that without some form of intervention in Kosovo the current low-intensity war will continue to escalate. The Yugoslav police and military forces are likely to go on attacking villages with excessive force. The Albanian majority in Kosovo will increasingly turn to the Kosovo Liberation Army to protect it. In a matter of months that small group of armed men has grown into a nationwide insurgency.

The Serbs claim not to be occupiers. But as long as they insist that 10 per cent of the population should govern the remaining 90 per cent and deny them the right to self-rule or self-determination, Kosovo's Albanians as well as the outside world will rightly define them as a colonial power.

In Europe the days of colonialism are over. Milosevic could end the war swiftly by accepting that. If he is genuine about negotiating a political solution, the issue of Kosovo's future status must be a legitimate subject for the talks, whether as a third republic of Yugoslavia, or if its people so decide in a referendum, as an independent state with full guarantees for its Serbian and other minorities. The dissolution of Yugoslavia has seen several new states emerge in Europe, and the birth of a state of Kosovo would not be a radical departure. Milosevic and those Serbs who support him (many do not) have only themselves to blame for pushing the majority of Kosovans to the wall.

The Washington Post

Death of Tobacco Bill Prompts Anger

John Schwartz

WITH the leading tobacco control bill dead, those who wanted to see a legislative action on youth smoking reacted last week with anger, disappointment — and, some, with optimism.

"I'm a bit disappointed, but not discouraged," said Michael Moore, the Mississippi attorney general who brought the first state lawsuit against tobacco companies in 1994. "I think we still have a very good chance of reviving this thing and getting something done."

Gary Black, an analyst with Sanford Bernstein Co. who has sided consistently with the industry as it fought the bill proposed by Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona, was gleeful at the death of that bill. Black called for a new attempt to pass a law that more closely resembled the deal struck among the industry, state attorneys general and private attorneys a year ago. "The industry, I think, would still like some sort of settlement."

Others were angry at what they described as a great opportunity lost. Matthew L. Myers of the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids said: "It's a tragedy for America's kids. The Congress had the opportunity to rise above partisan politics and demonstrate that it could free itself from the addiction to tobacco money — and today, it failed that test." Myers said that lawmakers would continue to try to append tobacco control legislation to other measures considered by Congress in this session.

Former Food and Drug Administration Commissioner David A. Kessler said that the end of the McCain bill did not mark the end of efforts to legislate tobacco policy. "This is one more battle," he said.

In the original June 20, 1997, settlement proposal, the industry would have paid some $368.5 billion over 25 years and agreed to restrictions on marketing and advertising tobacco products in return for protection against punitive damages and group lawsuits. It was roundly attacked by public health groups, however, which denounced the proposal as giving too much to the industry while getting too little back from the industry.

The settlement had to be ratified by Congress, and several competing bills emerged. One, sponsored by Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, closely reflected the June 1997 deal, but it was soon eclipsed by the McCain bill, which offered progressively less legal protection and called for billions more in industry fees. The tobacco industry walked [illegible] the process, declaring the deal dead, and kicked off a $40 million advertising campaign to kill the bill.

Last week, Scott Williams, a spokesman for the tobacco industry, said that public health activists, not the companies, were to blame for the bill's death. "It's important for the public health community to realize the loss they have inflicted upon themselves through their desire to punish the tobacco industry — and the administration bears the large part of the responsibility for the collapse." [illegible] what the industry strategy would be now. "People have to get up tomorrow, ask that question and answer it," Williams said.

Other battles over tobacco will not be stilled by the collapse of the McCain bill. The attempt by the Food and Drug Administration to restrict youth smoking by regulating tobacco marketing and advertising is still working its way through challenges brought by tobacco companies and advertisers. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals held a [illegible] indeed have jurisdiction over tobacco products, but could not regulate advertising. Both sides have appealed that decision.

Similarly, lawsuits filed by dozens of states to recover smoking-related health costs continue to work their way through the courts. Four states — Mississippi, Florida, Texas and Minnesota — have settled their suits for more than $35 billion and those settlements have included many of the public health concessions sought in the national deal [illegible] *say that they intend to pursue their suits to the end. "If [Congress] can't get the job done, I can assure you that the attorneys general will continue to fight on,"* said Grant Woods, Arizona's attorney general. "If we have to, we will resolve these public health issues state by state."

Albright Seeks Cooperation With Iran

Thomas W. Lippman

CONVINCED that President Mohammad Khatami is trying to take Iran in a new direction, Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright made the Clinton administration's first direct offer of cooperation with the Islamic government in Tehran last week in hopes of ending nearly 20 years of hostility.

Albright's speech was billed by aides as a major policy initiative that could eventually lead to normal relations. She did not list any specific steps the United States is ready to take toward that end, nor did she make specific demands of the Iranians, but her speech marked a clear departure from the administration's previous hopeful but cautious response to Khatami.

Ending hostility between Tehran and Washington would be a diplomatic breakthrough that would alter the strategic calculus of the Middle East and central Asia. Albright and other senior officials made clear that such a development is not imminent, and that Iran has a long way to go before full restoration of relations, but that they think it is no longer out of the question.

Albright's remarks followed months of cautious but accelerating gestures by both countries since Khatami's surprise election last year toward overcoming the legacy of the 1979 Iranian revolution, in which hatred of the United States because of its support of the Shah was a fundamental principle. Up to now, however, the administration has avoided a direct approach to Khatami partly out of fear that it would weaken him in his power struggle against militants in the religious establishment who oppose any rapprochement with Washington.

"There is fierce opposition to his viewpoint in Iran," White House national security adviser Samuel R. "Sandy" Berger told Washington Post editors and reporters. "We would very much like to see those who advocate a more open approach succeed."

Albright offered the prospect of working with Iran "when it is ready" to develop "a roadmap leading to normal relations." The same analogy was used by the administration of President George Bush to lay down requirements for Vietnam to achieve normal relations with the United States.

"Obviously, two decades of mistrust cannot be erased overnight," Albright said in a speech at the Asia Society in New York. "The gap between us remains wide. But it is time to test the possibilities for bridging this gap."

In the speech, Albright also proclaimed U.S. respect for Iran, for Khatami and for Islam, and said the United States shares Khatami's stated desire for "a world in which misunderstandings can be overcome and mutual respect and logic govern relations among states."

President Clinton signaled shortly after Khatami's landslide triumph over a hard-line mullah that he was intrigued by the prospect of a gradual lessing of tension with Iran. But the administration has moved cautiously because of Iran's record of sponsoring terrorism and attempting to acquire nuclear and biological weapons.

As recently as March 25, Bruce Riedel, the top Iran policy official on the National Security Council, said that despite encouraging signs from Tehran, "we will need to maintain a policy of seeking to constrain the dangerous behavior of Iran while trying to see if the changes in Tehran offer an opportunity for a better long-term relationship." He emphasized Iran's continuing support for Mideast terrorist groups such as Islamic Jihad, restated that "Iran continues to be the principal state sponsor of terrorist groups throughout the region."

Albright, by contrast, said last week that "in January, President Khatami publicly denounced terrorism and condemned the killing of innocent Israelis. He argued that terrorism was not only against Islam but also counterproductive to Iran's purposes. Iran, after all, has also been a victim of terrorism."

She said hopes for a closer relationship "must be balanced against the reality that Iran's support for terrorism has not yet ceased; serious violations of human rights persist; and its efforts to develop long range missiles and to acquire nuclear weapons continue."

Nevertheless, she said, "we are ready to explore further ways to build mutual confidence and avoid misunderstandings. The Islamic Republic should consider parallel steps."

Lewinsky 'Admits' to Sex

Peter Baker and Susan Schmidt

MONICA S. Lewinsky's new legal team, seeking a deal to protect her from prosecution, has offered to have her testify that she had sex with President Clinton, but independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr wants her to plead guilty to some offense as part of any agreement, according to lawyers close to the talks.

Lewinsky's lawyers have told Starr she would not testify that she was encouraged by Clinton or his friend Vernon E. Jordan Jr. to lie under oath in the Paula Jones lawsuit, a key focus of Starr's investigation, the legal sources said. However, they added, her new attorneys have argued that Starr should take what he can get because the contradictory statements of her former lawyer may have damaged Lewinsky's value as a witness against the president.

Starr, too, is playing hardball during this new round of discussions, offering as he has in the past only to consider a plea agreement and not the complete immunity that Lewinsky is seeking from possible perjury or obstruction of justice charges, the lawyers said.

The positions staked out by both sides may be simply opening bids in high-stakes negotiations, but they have defined the parameters of talks whose outcome is crucial to the Starr investigation.

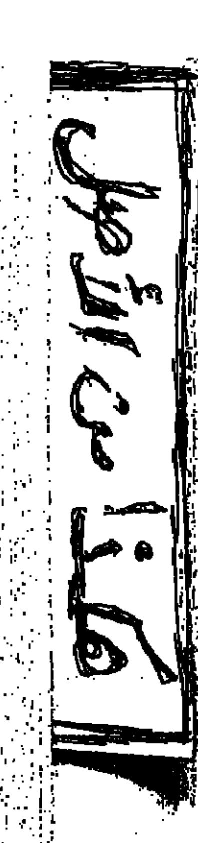
Despite the seeming gulf in their bargaining positions, both camps have signaled that they are optimistic they can strike a bargain in the next few weeks.

"Each side is working hard to reach some conclusion," said one attorney familiar with the talks.

Whether Starr would be satisfied with an admission of sex but no testimony about obstruction of justice is unclear. He rejected such a proposal offered by Lewinsky's former attorney, William H. Ginsburg, who according to defense lawyers submitted five separate — and in some ways inconsistent — proffers detailing how she would testify if given immunity.

But the new lawyers, Jacob A. Stein and Plato Cacheris, hope to use their credibility as respected Washington attorneys to persuade Starr. And if Lewinsky does testify that she had sex with Clinton, that statement alone could be problematic for the president, politically if not legally, because it would contradict his sworn testimony in the Jones lawsuit, not to mention his nationally televised statement that "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky."

The president's defenders are bracing to counter a possibly damaging witness. Clinton's defense team months ago commissioned a private detective agency to conduct a thorough investigation of Lewinsky's past, sources involved in the endeavor said.



Comforting Illusions on China

OPINION
Jim Hoagland

SOME Republicans skirt close to charging Bill Clinton with treason in his dealings with China, putting the president on the defensive as he prepares for a nine-day trip to the Middle Kingdom. Such partisan overstatement obscures the real problems, and the real politics, of the upcoming voyage.

The diplomatic strategy behind the presidential journey is flawed, not fatal or felonious. The United States is strong enough to survive the Clinton China policy (which greatly resembles those of his Republican predecessors) and Beijing's relatively feeble attempts to buy influence and advanced, militarily useful technology in the American marketplace.

It is the contribution this trip makes to the erosion of Clinton's credibility in the world that should be the primary concern of presidential critics and friends alike.

Clinton has already shown himself to have scant concern for the truth on a wide variety of subjects. He does not need to go to Tiananmen Square to remind the world of his extraordinary talent to deceive others and, arguably worse in a politician, to deceive himself when that is convenient.

But that is the situation he is setting up. His China trip is being scripted around a set of fictions. Clinton joins the Chinese in manipulating himself for their purposes, which he mistakes as identical to his own.

The most important fiction is that this trip is about changing the values and politics of China. It is in fact a trip dedicated to changing American perceptions and politics, to get the American public at large to accept the anodyne, uncritical view of China now firmly entrenched in the ranks of American business leaders and academic specialists.

The trip is being preceded not only by the spin sessions White House aides routinely provide for journalists but also by extraordinary advertising campaigns sponsored by Boeing, Mobil and other U.S. corporations pleading for understanding and political support for the Chinese Communist government's efforts to secure a special place in the world trading system.

Clinton argues that the strong words he will utter about America's commitment to human rights will eclipse the images of his warm embraces of China's leaders. He promises to negate the symbolism of his participating in an arrival ceremony on June 24 at the edge of Tiananmen Square, where Chinese troops slaughtered hundreds of peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators on June 4, 1989.

The ceremony at the square will be "a five-minute deal," with Clinton making no public statement there, Samuel R. (Sandy) Berger, the president's national security adviser, said on a visit to The Washington Post the other day.

But in China, the site of the arrival ceremony is now about politics, not protocol. The last foreign dignitary to visit China before the massacre of the students was Mikhail Gorbachev, who was greeted at Beijing airport to keep him away from the students, who had gathered in Tiananmen to endorse Gorbachev's perestroika reforms.

Douglas Paal, president of the Asia-Pacific Policy Center and George Bush's national security adviser on Asia, takes this view: "The Chinese began absolutely insisting that the arrival ceremony be held in the square after 1989, to make a political point. Before that the ceremony was often at the airport. Look at the photograph of Zhou Enlai greeting President Nixon [in 1972]."

A small detail? Berger clearly thinks so. "We can achieve more in advancing the cause of political freedom by not making the trip for the Chinese totally about Tiananmen, which it certainly would have been if we had declined to go, but about human rights. They made it very clear. This is where they do it."

But this is more than detail. It is characteristic of the administration's avoidance of inconvenient facts, and of its refusal to acknowledge the enormous importance that such details of form possess in Chinese society. Much of what Clinton and his aides don't know about China — from Tiananmen welcoming ceremonies to shipments of nuclear technology to Pakistan — exists because they determinedly don't want to know.

Republicans look at this trip and cry treason. Clinton looks past the corporate greed, political ego and strategic miscalculation that have shaped it to see the best of all worlds. Each side prefers comforting illusion to the mixed reality of an emerging China.

Woodward's Case of Trial And Error

EDITORIAL

LOUISE WOODWARD, freed after an appeals court upheld her manslaughter conviction in the death of 8-month-old Matthew Eappen, arrived home in England last week and — in her first public utterance — complained that she had not received a fair trial. Blaming "atrocious pre-trial publicity," she called on "the medical community" to clear her of any involvement in the baby's death.

Grant that this is a very young woman talking, one who has been through an ordeal, far from home. Grant, too, that she has a right to maintain her innocence. That granted, it would still be a travesty to accept Woodward's valuation of herself as the victim in this sad affair or to remember it as a tragedy that befell her rather than the Eappen family — not to mention the baby, whose death a jury, a judge and an appeals court all agreed Woodward caused. That realization seemed reflected in the British press's mixed reaction to her return and in the muted behavior of once fervid admirers in her home village of Elton; in sharp contrast to their [illegible] cork-popping revelry when the murder conviction was set aside, they declined to turn out for her return or to say anything too enthusiastic to the press.

Far from suffering unfairly, Woodward might plausibly be said to have received extraordinary leniency from the American courts. When a jury convicted her of second-degree murder, her lawyers begged the judge to reverse the effects of their own bold gamble of insisting the jury choose between that and outright acquittal. When the judge granted that request, he reduced the conviction to manslaughter and, to national astonishment, assigned a sentence of 279 days, or time served, well below the recommended minimum for the charge. Her luck held through the appeal to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, which, while upholding the conviction, declined to lengthen the sentence and noted that the judge's error — in allowing the lawyers' murder-or-nothing gambit — should not harm the defendant.

Woodward has insisted she has no intention of selling her story; the Eappens, nonetheless, have filed a probably unenforceable wrongful death suit against her in Massachusetts, saying they don't want her getting rich off their tragedy. Both her neighbors and her defense lawyer, Barry Scheck, agree that Woodward should try to put the events of the past year behind her, "not obsess" and get on with her life. Launching a new public relations campaign to reclaim her innocence will not do that — not for her, not for the Eappens or for the millions whose own fears and ambivalences about child care the trial brought uppermost. Some expression of responsibility, even remorse, would be a more graceful end to this sorry story.

Nerve Gas Allegations Spark Row

Howard Kurtz

RETIRED Maj. Gen. Perry Smith, CNN's military analyst since the Persian Gulf War, has resigned to protest the network's airing of allegations that U.S. troops used nerve gas against American defectors in Laos in 1970.

Smith quit after failing to convince Tom Johnson, chairman of the CNN News Group, that the network needed to retract the story, which aired on June 7 and was also published in Time magazine.

"I can't work for an organization that would do something like this and not fess up to it," Smith said last week. "When there's something on CNN of a military nature, there's an assumption by at least part of the military audience that I have approved this. I couldn't in good conscience still work for them. I had to break it off. It was just something I couldn't do."

CNN spokesman Steve Haworth said Smith "leaves with our respect" and that CNN is still investigating the nerve gas story. But, he said, "more than 200 interviews and eight months of research leave us continuing to believe that sarin gas was used on this mission, one of the purposes of which was to kill American defectors."

A best-selling author and speaker who served 30 years in the Air Force, Smith is based in Augusta, Georgia, and teaches ethics and management to businesses, war colleges and corporations.

Smith flew 130 combat sorties over Laos from 1968 to 1969 and said he never heard of lethal gas being used. He said he has consulted such former high-ranking military officials as Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf, who assured him that no nerve gas was used by the United States during the war. Smith quoted Schwarzkopf as calling the allegation "ridiculous."



Tornado effect in Florida: La Niña is likely to herald more Atlantic hurricanes PHOTO: CHRIS O'MEARA

La Niña Bids El Niño a Cold Farewell

Curt Suplee

THE INFAMOUS El Niño that has upset weather patterns worldwide since last fall will be followed by an opposite but similarly disruptive phenomenon, an oceanic cold spell called La Niña, according to a growing consensus of climate scientists.

In the United States, that means northern states west of the Great Lakes probably will have an uncommonly severe and soggy winter, whereas the recently sodden Southeast will be comparatively mild and dry. High temperatures and low precipitation are likely for the Southwest. In short, "This will be quite a dramatic switch from last year's pattern," said Vernon E. Kousky of the National Weather Service.

That's because conditions in the Pacific Ocean seem to be heading into a wholesale reversal of the El Niño situation that has dominated U.S. weather for eight months.

El Niño arises from an abnormal accumulation of hot surface water in the eastern equatorial zone. La Niña is caused by colder-than-average sea surface temperatures in that area. And the marine mercury has begun sinking fast.

In 1988, it took two months for the Pacific surface to chill by 7 degrees Fahrenheit (4 degrees Celsius). This year, the temperature of the coldest parts has dropped twice as much in half the time, and is already about 7 degrees below average.

"That's unprecedented speed," said Michael J. McPhaden, who directs the Tropical Atmosphere Ocean (TAO) sensor array program for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Given the agreement of satellite and surface measurements, as well as a majority of computer models, the National Centers for Environmental Prediction are calling for a cold episode to develop over the next six months "and continue through the northern 1998-99 winter."

It is not uncommon, though not *inevitable, for La Niña to follow El* Niño. It has done so three times in the past 15 years, McPhaden said. The intense El Niño of 1982-83 was followed by a weak La Niña; the modest 1986-87 El Niño preceded a strong La Niña; and the moderate but protracted El Niño of 1991-95 was succeeded by a weak La Niña.

That alternation suggests La Niña is nature's way of rectifying the heat imbalance El Niño represents. In a normal year, high pressure near the west coast of the Americas keeps brisk trade winds blowing across the Pacific from the east. In an El Niño year, the easterly trade winds falter for reasons as yet unknown, and hot water comes sloshing eastward to accumulate in the eastern Pacific, where associated storms frequently cause flooding.

In a La Niña year, the trade winds are strong enough to strip a lot of the warm surface layer off the far eastern Pacific, allowing more cold water to well up. In the tropical Atlantic, however, hurricanes could become more frequent, with a 66 percent probability of two or more hurricanes hitting the U.S. coast.

Teenagers Closing Gap Between Sexes

Girls catch up with boys in both positive and negative ways, write **Barbara Vobejda** and **Linda Perlstein**

A GENERATION after a great national rethinking of gender roles and the forces that classify children by their sex, the results are in: American girls are behaving more like boys — and it isn't always a pretty picture.

Girls have virtually caught up with boys in math performance and have closed the gap considerably in science. But they are now smoking, drinking and using drugs as often as boys their age. And though they are not nearly as violent as boys, girls are increasingly more likely to find their way into trouble with the law.

A status report released last week by a consortium of universities and research centers describes the nation's young females as a population stepping out of many traditional stereotypes that have defined girls for generations. And that, it is becoming clear, can be both good and bad.

"Adolescent girls are getting more of a sense of entitlement in healthy ways and feeling bolder, but some may be acting this out in ways that are not so healthy," said Lynn Phillips, author of The Girls Report, which compiled the most recent research on girls from hundreds of academic and government sources. "There are ways we want girls to catch up with boys, but there are also ways we want boys to catch up with girls."

Some of the progress girls have made results from public policies and private efforts — to enhance math, science and sports programs for girls, for example. But more subtle social pressures have also had an effect, pushing girls to follow the less desirable patterns set by boys in other ways.

While 13 percent of eighth grade girls reported smoking in 1991, the report shows, that figure increased to 21 percent in 1996, a faster increase than that for boys. And nearly 17 percent of eighth grade girls used marijuana in 1996, compared to just over 5 percent in 1991.

In its report, the National Council for Research on Women dealt with girls of elementary school age through college. Among its findings were:

While girls are still less likely than boys to be arrested for violent crimes, the rate at which they are being arrested for these crimes increased faster than that for boys between 1986 and 1995.

Girls participate in a wider range of sports and exercise more than ever before, but they still lag far behind boys. And a federal study found that the percentage of high school sophomore girls participating in sports declined from 46 percent in 1980 to 41 percent a decade later, while male participation remained even at 63 percent.

After years of concern about girls trailing boys in math performance, a 1996 test administered by the U.S. Department of Education found no significant differences between average scores for eighth and 12th grade girls and boys.

In science, girls perform about as well as boys until the 12th grade, when boys' average scores pull ahead and more boys excel in science.

Although much of what the new report documents are the problems that face girls, it also challenges many popular stereotypes. It questions, for example, the notion that adolescent girls are doomed to go through a period of low self-esteem or that the teen years are inevitably filled with anger and stress.

It also makes clear that, despite their convergence with boys on some measures, in many important ways, girls remain very different.

They are twice as likely to be depressed as boys, for example. And a federal survey of high school students found that 34 percent of girls see themselves as overweight, compared to 22 percent of boys. Nearly two out of three of the girls were attempting to lose weight.

Racial differences among girls are important in many instances. African American girls, for example, have more positive perceptions of their own bodies than do white and Hispanic girls. And black girls are significantly less likely to smoke than girls of other races or African American boys.

The also found that girls are frequently the victims of violent crime. It cited studies estimating that between one third and one fourth of girls are sexually victimized by the time they finish high school. That includes a range of experiences from rape to sexual harassment. Nearly two-thirds of rape victims are under 17 years old, the report said.

In the United States the percentage of girls using tobacco is rising much faster than for boys PHOTO: ALAN MOTHNER

Kidnapper Strikes Fear in Mexicans

**Serge F. Kovaleski
In Mexico City**

IN THE thriving world of Mexican kidnappers, Daniel Arizmendi Lopez is second to none. A former car thief who is now believed to be a multimillionaire, he has roiled Mexico with his sheer, if not gratuitous, brutality, his savage tormenting of hostages' families and his Houdini-like elusiveness.

In a country increasingly plagued by violence, Arizmendi, 39, is Mexico's most-wanted fugitive, the focus of the largest manhunt in recent Mexican history.

Law enforcement authorities and legions of psychologists and sociologists have tirelessly tried to dissect Arizmendi's mind from afar. Recently, however, he gave a first-hand glimpse of his psyche when he called the Mexican newspaper Reforma and talked with a reporter.

In discussing his trademark practice of slashing off captives' ears, Arizmendi said he resorts to such terror "because their relatives, having the money, do not want to give it to me. I have told them, 'God will punish you and me. You for being so avaricious, for amassing the money and not [illegible] me.' [illegible] added, "I think I am going to hell."

"If there is something I fear it is jail and poverty," he said. "I do not fear death, you can be sure of that."

Investigators say Arizmendi leads a criminal ring that has reaped tens of millions of dollars through abductions over the last eight years, mostly in central Mexico and here in the capital. He has brought horror into the lives of many families, most of them wealthy: mutilating and killing some of his victims, raping some of his female hostages — even after relatives had come up with the large ransoms he demanded, Mexican officials have said.

One estimate puts Arizmendi's earnings at more than $40 million, the majority of which was made during the second half of last year by targeting affluent businessmen. Fear that Arizmendi and his gang of gunmen could strike at any time has led to a growing demand for private security.

Investigators say the main reason Arizmendi has eluded capture and operates with such brazenness is that he has protected himself by paying off police and other law-enforcement authorities. Police allegedly have carried out abductions and torture in collusion with his group, as well as independently. Furthermore, the various investigative agencies involved in the search for Arizmendi have been criticized for a lack of coordination and intelligence sharing.

Kidnapping in this country of 96 million people, as in other parts of Latin America, has become a boom industry, viewed as a way to transcend poverty with minimal risk, given the Mexican justice system's limitations and corruption.

Over the last three years, authorities have logged nearly 1,860 abductions, but the actual number is believed to be much higher. The attorney general's office in February announced the creation of an anti-kidnapping unit with federal jurisdiction. Since then, however, at least one of its agents has been arrested on charges of kidnapping.

Turning Back the Wheels of Time

COMMENT
Ellen Goodman

"WELL, I'm off, wish me luck," says my fellow traveler as he rolls his carry-on bag down the aisle and out of the plane. "I'll come back *with* the car keys or *on* them," he adds with an Odyssean touch as he disappears into the terminal.

We have flown together up the East Coast to the town that this man grew up in and that his parents still call home. Between the long delayed liftoff and landing, he described the classical task set before him: to convince, to urge or, if necessary, to order his 83-year-old father to give up his place in the driver's seat.

This is what has happened over the past year. His father's lingering pride has come into conflict with his failing eyesight. One car accident escalated into the next until finally he drove over the curb and into a neighbor's trash barrels. Next time, the family worries, it could be a neighbor's child.

The task of key removal has fallen to this eldest son, a 56-year-old manager, by birth order and default. His mother had said, "I can't talk to him about it." His brother had demurred, "He listens to you best." And so the manager bought a ticket and took on a job that looms as an unexpected and unwelcome filial chore.

What was on this son's mind as we circled over Providence en route to the last roundup of the old man's Taurus? The middle-aged son was remembering the time, 40 years ago, when this dad taught him how to drive. They headed for an empty supermarket parking lot. The father handed over the keys, the sweaty-palmed son grabbed the shift. The father patiently taught him to drive, stop, start, park. The older man gave the younger his wheels.

It was a rite of passage to independence that this son repeated with his own sons — with a car that had automatic drive and a teacher with less patience. Now it has come to this, he said uneasily, a much less welcome rite of return passage.

As we part company it occurs to me that my fellow traveler has not embarked on this route alone. The manager is part of a much less-recognized sandwich generation: the triple-decker generation. The middle-aged children of elderly parents, the 50- and 60-something children of 80- and 90-something parents.

These days, I meet more and more people who are the filling between adult children and aged parents. Their emptying and empty nests are bursting — surprisingly — with worries about parents.

Our country is growing older by the decade. Many of our parents have outlived their own parents by a decade or two. If the baby boomers are unprepared for Social Security they will be even less prepared for providing this emotional support.

There is nothing that sets out for us what to expect dealing with the stages of 70s, 80s, 90s. In raising children, we are told, the pendulum swings between permissiveness and authoritarianism. But what about relating to our elders? How do we avoid being overbearing or neglectful? When does our respect for their autonomy leave them in the lurch? When does caretaking take away their own power? The gears do not mesh easily. Add to that, the fact that the triple-decker generation is now in the penumbra of its own old age.

For my fellow traveler the car keys are a real problem, but also a symbol. With luck, his father will give him another driver's lesson, and show him how to navigate this twist in the road with grace and good sense — as a passenger.

But for the moment, I cannot help wondering why the parents who gave us those wheels never taught us how hard it is to put our family roles into reverse.

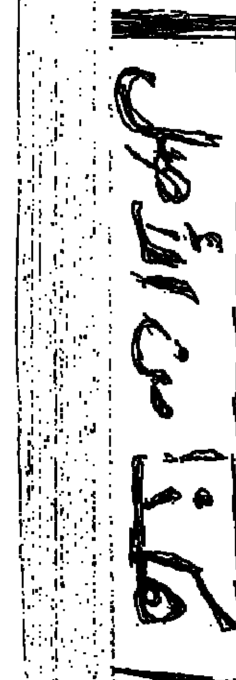


ILLUSTRATION: ANTHONY RUSSO

Ode To Adolescent Confusion

Hans Johnson

THE BOY
By Naeem Murr
Houghton Mifflin. 214 pp. $22

FEW settings convey a society's underside better than abandoned buildings. Amid a [illegible] conjure up lives and labors disregarded and prosperity that moved elsewhere. When in a novel's first pages such a site's rubble-strewn floor becomes a murder scene and the surroundings take shape as present-day London, the stage seems set for a gritty urban mystery.

But Naeem Murr's first novel, The Boy, is more than a macabre story. The plot unwinds like a poem, as if the narrator had stumbled on a roll of film that jogged his memory. "I shall tell you what I know. The names I shall use are not, of course, the real names, though they have a personal resonance for me," he says cryptically.

After the corpse of a young man appears on the second page, the first character to emerge is Sean Hennessy, divorced, fortyish, a frustrated would-be British politician and two-time grieving dad. His search through London for a long-lost foster son — the boy — leads him to an orphanage and into the lives of caregivers and street hustlers who knew the sexy, elusive teen by one of several aliases. Hennessy's quest and the reader's need to resolve the teen's murder impel the story while allowing glimpses of the nightmares in Hennessy's past and the dashing of his electoral ambitions.

[illegible] Hennessy's anxious, protective mother is depicted as a "taut membrane" wrapped around the family, and his deal-making, alcoholic father as a headlong cliff-diver, "searching somewhere below him for that speck of blue." Like Margaret Atwood, Murr traffics in images so capably that the novel's space becomes a kind of magnetic field, alluring, almost confining.

Yet even good poets can fall prey to affectations. The allusion to Shakespeare's "Richard II" and "this England" in the description of the first-chapter murder scene comes off as clumsy.

There are also problems with the plot. The boy's roustabout life on the streets somehow fails to mar his beauty or break his seamless eloquence, which he has achieved without a hint of the self-taught scholar's diligence. Diary entries from Hennessy's deceased daughter, Megan, who clung to the boy she knew as Durward during his stint as her foster brother, beg an explanation for their appearance. The steady, lucid tone of her journal would be precocious even for many seasoned adults, and her penetrating observations and attention to worldly details seem inconsistent with her fatal retreat into depression.

Through the conventions they [illegible] pectations about actual lives. Adroit critics, such as the late Vito Russo, have noted the ease with which writers and filmmakers have killed off gay characters rather than explore what other futures they might face. The deaths of the two most prominent homosexual characters in The Boy throw up a red flag.

Still, the novel's virtues far outweigh its defects. It displays a powerful empathy for its characters, who move uncertainly among the wastelands of a thriving city and the assurances of Britain's new Labor government that "things can only get better." It captures the vulnerability of children, on whom the burdens of adulthood sometimes seem to fall so prematurely.

Like the abandoned buildings that are its backdrop, The Boy makes it hard for readers to walk away unhaunted. And after such a brief tour of the ruins, the sooner this author sets out to explore the urban underside again, the better.

Bickering Towards Peace

Tom Gjelten

TO END A WAR
By Richard Holbrooke
Random House. 408 pp. $27.95

IN THE time of fighting and negotiation, the presidents of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia impressed outsiders mostly with their stubbornness. Alija Izetbegovic focused so squarely on the suffering of his Muslims that he could not acknowledge the pain of others. Slobodan Milosevic was second to none as a master of denial and evasion. Franjo Tudjman imagined himself a great statesman but did not measure up in moments of crisis.

"Once enraged," writes Richard Holbrooke, "these leaders needed outside supervision to stop themselves from self-destruction." Holbrooke was one of the few diplomats with the skill and temperament to handle the supervisory assignment. Over a four-month period in the summer and fall of 1995, he directed the exhaustive and complex negotiations that led to the Dayton peace agreement. He brought to the task an acerbic manner and a talent for improvisation that kept him and his team a step ahead of their difficult Balkan partners.

Other diplomats, both American and European, had tried before to launch a peace process and failed. Holbrooke may have been more en- [illegible] bully. He was also luckier, aided by a NATO bombing campaign and a timely offensive by the Croatian army. Unavoidably, his behind-the-scenes story of the negotiations is a self-promoting account. To End A War is also one of the most important and readable diplomatic memoirs of recent times. Holbrooke writes vividly of his dramatic encounters with the Balkan leaders and of the unlikely settings where peace progress was made, from a dinner at the late Pamela Harriman's residence in Paris to a gas station pay phone on the Long Island Expressway.

The crafting of the Dayton peace agreement required five interim accords, negotiated separately during weeks of intensive shuttle diplomacy from Belgrade to New York. The process was "dangerous and unpredictable," Holbrooke writes, "something like a combination of chess and mountain climbing." His account should restore some respect for the often maligned art of diplomacy.

The book's greatest merit is its contribution to diplomatic history. Holbrooke argues that Europe and the United States were "equally misguided" in their initial approach to the Yugoslav disintegration crisis — the Europeans for thinking they could handle it on their own; Washington for thinking it had "no dog in this fight," as Secretary of State James Baker said in 1992.

Holbrooke's portrayal of Europeans as prone to bickering and obsessed with status is just short of contemptuous. Britain, France and Germany wanted Italy excluded from the Contact Group, he says, mainly because "they liked the prominence that came from being senior members of a prestigious international negotiating group. (Never mind its effectiveness.)" But Holbrooke is just as harsh in his treatment of those in the U.S. government who failed to support an assertive policy in Bosnia.

Holbrooke, however, largely fails to address one issue over which he has been criticized — his relationship with Serbian leader Milosevic. Holbrooke's first big achievement in Yugoslavia was to get Milosevic to represent the Bosnian Serbs in all peace talks. The Holbrooke-Milosevic connection was at the core of the peace negotiation process. Holbrooke reports that Milosevic is "smart" and "charming." He refuses [illegible] Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic. He apparently has no such qualms about his meetings with Milosevic, though it was at the latter's bidding that Karadzic and Mladic did much of their dirty work.

This is not just a question of style. Many U.S. officials believe there is little chance of peace in the Balkans as long as Milosevic remains in power, and they wonder whether Holbrooke acted wisely in depending on the Serbian leader so much. Holbrooke needs to confront this criticism, and he has not.

The other half of the relationship, of course, is Holbrooke himself. This book will undoubtedly be read as evidence of his tendency for seeking publicity. This is not to suggest that credit is undeserved. Holbrooke argued early for U.S. involvement in Bosnia, and his counsel was often ignored. This book was for him an opportunity to argue that he was right all along, and he does so persuasively.

The Origin of Darwinism

Michael Olmert

THE SPICE ISLANDS VOYAGE
The Quest for Alfred Wallace
By Tim Severin
Carroll & Graf. 267 pp. $25

"WHAT mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?" Keats said when he came to consider that Grecian urn, indulging his historical imagination. Just so, Tim Severin has queried the past and given us two books in one: a travel adventure and a ripping-yarn biography. Both center on the life of the pioneering evolutionary biologist (and serious rival to Darwin) Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913).

Severin has made a career out of recreating others' bad trips: Sindbad, Ulysses, Marco Polo, St. Brendan bobbing up and down in a leather coracle. Many have tried this, most famously Thor Heyerdahl, with uneven results. But Severin is the best of the lot. Plainly, he is a born storyteller.

In 1854, Wallace went out to Indonesia to collect rare plants and animals. Every night, he'd heroically work up his field notes, pin his specimens, and then labor on his journal, despite pitched fevers and constant suppurating sores. He had a gift for "tireless scrutiny" of nature, the art of ceaseless and deductive observation.

Then, for four years, Wallace wandered the eastern Malay archipelago (the Moluccas or Spice Islands), hitching his way on native boats called *prahus*. Severin had such a craft made for himself and his team, using methods involving wooden pegs rather than nails, dead reckoning rather than actual measuring, and great square-rigged sails. Not that it was difficult to find craftsmen capable of making a mid-19th century *prahu*; the boats are still in common use today, though for short inter-island trips, not open-ocean venturing.

Severin reproduced Wallace's four years in just four months, revisiting most of Wallace's stops, looking for the stellar and now-threatened creatures that so stunned Victorian biology. Wallace saw black cockatoos, birds that use a leaf as a tool with which they firmly hold and crack open a certain slippery nut. The white cockatoos were innocent of the leaf trick, and this difference in the species gave the black birds the nutritional and environmental leverage they needed to survive. It's one of the animal behaviors that started Wallace thinking about evolution.

Wallace produced his 4,000-word "On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from Their Original Type" in February 1858 on the island of Ternate and mailed it off to Darwin. Darwin said he received the letter on June 18, but claimed that the solution to the problem of the origin of species had already occurred to him, on June 8. He even remembered the very "spot on the road" where the Damascene event happened.

In any case, the result was the hurried and infamous joint reading, on July 1 at the Linnean Society in London, of Wallace's paper and a short, confused pastiche by Darwin (but not presented by him). In fact, Wallace precipitated Darwin into print. Within 18 months, Darwin's book would take the intellectual world by storm. It still holds the scholarly high ground, is still more useful than any other 19th-century scientific work. (Wallace was in the Spice Islands during all this.)

Severin has done a great job voyaging in Wallace's wake, attempting to reconstruct his sense of wonder and astonishment and the slowly dawning message that nature was holding out to mankind. But by closely following Wallace's fine book The Malay Archipelago (1869), Severin also shows us an intellect in turmoil. Wallace had gone beak to beak with Darwin, and Wallace had blinked.

A generous and probably far-too-deferential man, Wallace always called the theory of evolution "Darwinism" and dedicated his book to the great man. But the Wallace persona seems a bit too controlled and safe, never pierced by self-consciousness or any triumphant awareness of his self-worth. He emerged from the working class and never deigned to confront the magisterial Darwin. It's as though, to paraphrase Philip Larkin, he never climbed clear of his wrong beginnings.

Severin's science and his historical imagination are both suggestive and enlightening. He's made a book that's full of birds and bugs and boats, but it also has heart.



GUARDIAN WEEKLY June 28 1998

The secret heart of Japanese darkness

Bernard Eisenschitz explores the intense, unsentimental themes of Kenji Mizoguchi's films

THE films of Kenji Mizoguchi, the Japanese director who is being given a comprehensive retrospective at the Paris Cinémathèque until July 20, take one into a strangely compelling world that does not easily yield up its secrets.

The smooth camera movements that do not always follow the characters, the splendid handling of surfaces and fabrics, the relationship between dialogue and the characters' movements, the palpable passage of time and the intensity of distraught faces that reveal their secrets in close-up are all elements of a *mise-en-scène* that defies description.

Mizoguchi's films reached the West towards the end of his life. In the fifties a fast-recovering Japan began to send his movies to the Venice and Cannes festivals, where they immediately caught on.

However, although for Western audiences they had a degree of exoticism in common, Mizoguchi's The Life Of Oharu (1951), Ugetsu Monogatari (1953), The Crucified Lovers (1954) and Sansho The Bailiff (1954) were in no way comparable with a film like Akira Kurosawa's Rashomon, let alone Teinosuke Kinugasa's Gate Of Hell.


Scene from The Crucified Lovers, in which the couple form a death pact NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

The younger generation of French film critics at the time rejected the notion of cultural singularity and saw Mizoguchi's films as being the very definition of *mise-en-scène*. "It is that language, and not Japanese, which one needs to learn in order to understand Mizoguchi," Jacques Rivette wrote.

That language did indeed prompt wild enthusiasm for the other Mizoguchi films when they were shown at the Cinémathèque without subtitles — the four-hour, two-part The Loyal 47 Ronin (1942), Osaka Elegy (1936), which was more radical than any Popular Front film, and Utamaro And His Five Women (1946), a poetic self-portrait of the director.

These earlier works, as well as others directed before the watershed of the war, painted the same grim picture as his final masterpiece, Street Of Shame (1956), and corrected the image of serenity and resignation that had been rather hastily foisted on Mizoguchi.

Soon his image was shown to have an extra dimension. The theatre director Ariane Mnouchkine and the film historian Georges Sadoul talked to people in Kyoto and Tokyo who had worked with Mizoguchi. They described him as a very difficult man and a total perfectionist who would insist on his scriptwriters rewriting screenplays 10 times in a row without him saying what was wrong with them.

Another side of his character, which had the effect of enriching his films, was revealed by Kaneto Shindo, who spent 15 years working for Mizoguchi as an assistant and scriptwriter before going on to direct such movies as The Island. He said of Mizoguchi: "Money was the only thing that interested him — money so he could have women."

So much for the idealistic view of Mizoguchi. Meanwhile his movies, as they gradually became accessible, confirmed the continuity of his inspiration between the thirties and the fifties.

Although 50 of the 53 silent films he made between 1924 and 1935 have been lost, the 27 sound movies included in the Cinémathèque retrospective (out of the 33 he made in all) give a very comprehensive picture of his output during the last 20 years of his life.

Mizoguchi may have been lionised in the West, but he was less appreciated in his own country, where he was seen as a political opportunist and an ordinary director of "quality" films. The fact that he always worked for big producers and seemed, late in his career, to pander to their wishes by turning out products designed to do well in the West contributed to the indifference shown by his compatriots towards, for example, a film like Ugetsu Monogatari, which was quickly classified by international critics as one of the 10 best movies of all time.

Prostitution is the mainspring of almost all Mizoguchi's films. 'Money was the only thing that interested him — money so he could have women'

It was precisely because he worked within codified formulas — adaptations of great literary classics, prostitute movies, prestige films — that he was able to get audiences to accept the violence of his films, their virulence and their moral intransigence (in that, he was comparable to John Ford, who was regarded as an old reactionary, yet directed Westerns that took a quite pitiless view of American society).

Prostitution, whether literal or metaphorical, is the mainspring of almost all Mizoguchi's movies. A typical Mizoguchi story shows a character or some kind of passion (ambition, lust or love) that prevents the mechanism of society from functioning properly, then describes the various stages in which society eliminates or absorbs that intervention from outside — except in exceptional cases where the intervention takes the form of rebellion, such as the determination of the couple in The Crucified Lovers to die together or the decision by the hero of New Tales Of The Taira Clan (1954) to fire arrows at the monks' baldachins.

Mizoguchi's pre-war movies often represented female figures enmeshed in the very substance of cinematic technique: in Tokyo March (1929), which has survived in only fragmentary form, the interplay of gazes creates an imaginary space in the Ernst Lubitsch manner; and the non-chronological narrative of The Downfall Of Osen (1934), sustained by the autonomy of the camera and the editing, eventually drives the heroine mad.

As the years went by, Mizoguchi refocused his interest on the harmony of appearances. The feeling of happiness generated by the central episode of Ugetsu Monogatari almost makes one forget the theme that runs right through the movie: the horrors of war.

Mizoguchi's art resides in the way he articulates his ideal of beauty — "He dreamt of using national treasures as accessories," said his favourite actress, Kinuyo Tanaka — with sadistic relationships.

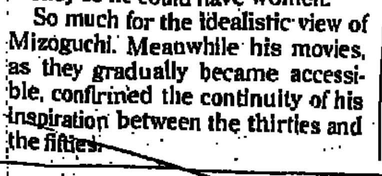
He is equally clearcut in his attitude towards money and desire: he always describes the social background that underpins the oppression of women by men, and of the dispossessed by the propertied.

In a typical Mizoguchi movie the battle of money and the battle of the sexes interlock as the fast-moving plot unfolds. There is no hint of sentimentality in the dialogue. Even when the characters talk about love, they are always putting across vital information. At the end of the plot all possible relationships have been exhausted and all the characters are mentally drained. Nothing is left but cries of despair, as in Sisters Of The Gion (1936) and Women Of The Night (1948).

Beauty itself is shown to be a pawn in the power game. There is nothing exhilarating about the wonderful shots of a geisha getting dressed in Gion Festival Music (1953) or of women making up in front of a mirror in Sisters Of The Gion or Street Of Shame: here, the creation of beauty is a task that serves a specific purpose.

The last shot of Mizoguchi's last film shows a very young prostitute gesturing to clients in Street Of Shame. "For some are in darkness/ And others are in the light/ And those in the light can be seen/ Those in the darkness cannot be seen," concludes Bertolt Brecht's Threepenny Opera. Curiously, Mizoguchi's birth in 1898 and death in 1956 both fell within weeks of those of Brecht, with whom he had so much in common.

(June 11)



Murmured melody

Alain Lompech

ON JUNE 4 Mart[ha Ar]gerich, the Argentine p[ianist,] gave a rare public perfor[mance] at the Théâtre des Champs[-Ely]sées, Paris. There were ma[ny] professional pianists in the au[dien]ce: no musician or music-lov[er w]ould want to miss a concert [by t]he pianist who has come to [be] known as "la Martha", who [wa]s once described by Philippe [...]cers as "indestructible and re[vol]utionary in a uniformly dull [and] mechanised world".

She walk[ed] daintily on to the concert platf[orm], adjusted her stool, said a [wo]rd to the conductor, Charle[s D]utoit, and placed her hand[s] on the keyboard. She then gave a performance of Maurice [Ra]vel's Concerto in G major in which her phrasing, freedom of approach and building up of climaxes seemed more serene than in the pa[st].

Although Argerich allowed herself to be carried away by the lyric flights of this exultant work and did not curb the rhythmical drive of the first and third movements, she took her time when shaping her phrases and seemed driven by a broader and more relaxed inner voice.

In the first movement, when she allowed her inspiration a free rein as she almost always does, her tone and the originality and freedom of her playing, were reminiscent of Alfred Cortot. He, too, always gave the impression he was improvising; he, too, was a "character".

It is only when you dominate every bar of a work that you can give the audience the feeling they are listening to its creation; it is only when you are in total control of a score that you can hit one or two wrong notes without it mattering.

The long, dreamlike slow movement came as a compelling reminder that Ravel was a diffident man who revealed his personality paradoxically, by taking refuge behind the challenges he set himself.

The tune, the longest in the history of Western music, is written with staggering virtuosity and has no real beginning or end. That is how Argerich played it, as a tender and almost imperceptible murmur.

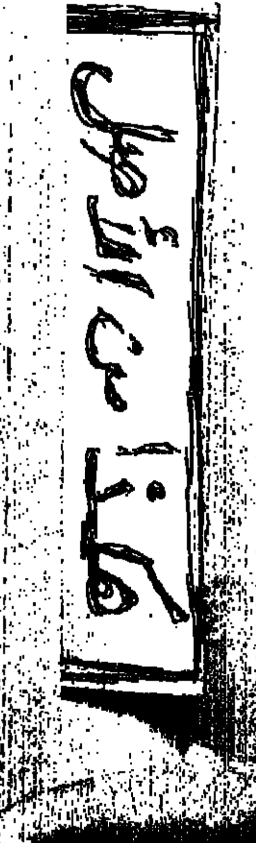
The Orchestre National de France accompanied Argerich with loving attention, apart from one or two slightly muffed passages in the fast movements — the concerto pushes the woodwind and brass to their limits.

Dutoit encouraged Argerich to give an encore. She played a piece by the Argentine composer, Alberto Ginastera, a *milonga* with earthy Indian modal touches. In an attempt to staunch the torrents of applause, Argerich begged the members of the orchestra to leave the platform with her.

The musicians spent a long time after the concert chatting outside the theatre. They were happy to have contributed to the successful return of a pianist whom they have known for many years, and whom they appreciate as much as she appreciates them.

(June 7-8)

GUARDIAN WEEKLY June 28 1998



[Civ]ilisation's high price [fo]r saving 'lost' tribes

CITY WORDS
John R[yle]

EARLIE[R th]is month the latest lost trib[e in] the Amazon — 200-strong and li[ving] in a dozen communal huts co[ncea]led beneath the forest canopy [—] was discovered in the state of A[cre] on the border between Brazil [an]d Peru. This nameless group [is] the most recent in a long line of lo[st t]ribes, communities whose exi[ste]nce is announced, with breath[les]s regularity, for the edification of an international audience hungry for the thrill of the primitive.

In the past few decades, since the beginning of large-scale destruction of forest-dwelling communities in the 1950s, there has been a new lost tribe in the Amazon about every other year. According to an official of Funai, the Brazilian Federal Indian Agency — the same official who located the settlement in Acre — there could be 50 more still to be found. That is to say, 50 communities that do not consort with white people (white in the sense of non-Amerindian).

This is the meaning of "lost", "uncontacted" and "undiscovered": these words refer to groups of indigenous people that have not yet had missionaries, gold-miners, anthropologists or officials of Funai in their midst. But such "uncontacted tribes" have plenty of contact with other groups, whose members are themselves in routine contact with the wider world. They just don't go where white people are. Or, if they do, they kill them.

That is what the lost tribe of Acre did, according to the Funai official. Coming upon a settler fishing in their part of the jungle, they shot him — with arrows. Poor Domingos Neves. May he rest in peace. But such an isolated act of violence seems negligible when set against the millions of Americans who have died at the hands of settlers since the beginning of European colonisation, or even just those who have been killed in clashes in the past few years with gold-prospectors and loggers in the northern Amazon.

Most of those who have died in the war in the north are Yanomami. Beleaguered as they are, they are in no way an undiscovered tribe. Their name is known to people who couldn't tell you where São Paulo is. Their presence in global discourse is largely due to the efforts for more than 20 years of a dedicated group of Brazilian and French anthropologists who have alerted the world to encroachments on their territory.

But has it done them any good? In her forthcoming book Linda Rabben, an anthropologist and activist, argues that international attention has at least helped buy time for the Yanomami to come to terms with modernity as they are sucked into the vortex of world history.

The paradox of survival for peoples like the Yanomami is that in order to retain a space for themselves in the modern body politic they must induce a radical transformation in their own culture.

The Kayapó, the only other Brazilian tribe the world has heard of, have had more success. They have managed to extract a rake-off from loggers and miners by trading on their reputation for extreme violence.

But the Kayapó have paid a price. Rabben documents the degradation that their wealth has brought: drunkenness and social division, loss of traditional skills and disregard for the natural resources of which they are the custodians, the forests and rivers that we, romantic primitivists, would like to imagine them cherishing.

The myth of undiscovered tribes, lost in the jungle, is a distraction from the far more serious and difficult business of helping peoples such as the Yanomami and the Kayapó adapt to their new circumstances without getting lost in modernity.

Linda Rabben's Unnatural Selection: The Yanomami, The Kayapó and the Onslaught of Civilisation, is published by Pluto at £12.95
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Will Eappen tragedy be repeated?

Jon Leyne in Boston and John Arlidge

THE AU PAIR agency that recruited Louise Woodward has blocked legislation designed to prevent a repeat of the death of baby Matthew Eappen. This means there is nothing to prevent au pairs in the United States being put in the same position as Woodward — given young children to look after with only minimal training.

EF Au Pair, a leading agency in the US, has lobbied successfully against a law designed to introduce a basic standard of training for au pairs in Massachusetts. The bill will run out of time in the state legislature in a few weeks' time. Meanwhile the agency has stopped tougher federal regulations being introduced across the US.

The bill's sponsor, Massachusetts state congresswoman Marie Parente, says EF launched an "unprecedented" lobbying campaign. Accounts available from the charity authorities in Massachusetts show that EF Au Pair's parent company, the ED Educational Foundation for Foreign Study, spent $98,704 on lobbyists last year. By all accounts, the spending has continued this year.

The money appears to have been well directed. The lobbying has successfully prevented the introduction of compulsory training for au pairs in first aid and emergency resuscitation. It has also managed to block the introduction of better screening [...] psychological profiles. Another proposal to limit the numbers of young children that au pairs can supervise has been successfully resisted by the au pair lobby led by EF.

In Britain, vetting procedures used by EF have been condemned as unacceptably lax. Although agency officials insist they have strict entry requirements, girls as young as 18 simply need two references to be accepted. One can be provided by a member of the family and the other by a close friend or neighbour. A few hours of babysitting for a family friend is considered "reasonable" childcare experience.

Irene Lucas, head of the UK and Overseas Nanny Agency, Britain's oldest nannying organisation, says: "It is a recipe for exactly the kind of problems suffered by Louise Woodward. She was a young woman — not adequately qualified to be left in charge of babies — who suddenly found herself in total charge of a very young child. That should never have happened. Louise Woodward is a scapegoat, not a victim."

The president of EF Au Pair, Philip Johnson, insists the company was not against better regulation of the au pair business. "Our position is that we support the interest of the legislation," he said. "We don't want the au pair programme specially targeted. We welcome additional standards, but we want to make sure that works within the framework of the programme."

Parente has grown weary of that claim in the months she has spent trying to overcome the stalling of lobbyists. "Whatever the intention of EF Au Pair, nothing has happened to prevent another Louise Woodward going into the home of a Massachussetts family tomorrow."

Parente believes EF Au Pair was the real villain of the Woodward affair. "If EF Au Pair was monitoring its au pairs it should have known there was a problem," she says. "Louise Woodward was not prepared for what she found in that home."

IT'S THE latest in a series of lobbying successes by EF and the other seven organisations that run the rapidly expanding US au pair programme, which is officially categorised as an educational exchange programme. That status means it is supervised by the United States Information Agency (USIA), a sub-division of the State Department, whose main job is presenting a good image of the US abroad.

The USIA has only one full-time official to check on the implementation of the minimal regulations it tries to impose on the programme. The au pair agencies have managed to prevent responsibility being transferred to the better qualified Department of Labor.

Meanwhile EF's accounts show that it made large amounts of money from the au pair business, while benefiting from its status as a "non-profit" organisation — the US equivalent of a registered charity. That status means it is exempt from tax. Massachusetts law also restricts its liability in civil suits to only $20,000 — one reason the Eappens have so far not launched a lawsuit against them.

According to the accounts of EF's parent company, the ED Educational Foundation for Foreign Study, and its sister organisation, the EF Intercultural Foundation, several senior executives paid themselves handsome salaries. EF's finances are already being examined in another court case.

Currently au pairs who arrive to work in the US under the auspices of EF Au Pair undergo an intensive training course for just a few days in New York before starting work.

Cheryl Mele, a former regional co-ordinator for another au pair organisation, EurAuPair, believes the training is totally inadequate. Mele, a licensed childcare provider, was so concerned about the lack of training for the au pairs she supervised, she arranged for them to have courses in first aid and resuscitation.

The situation is causing deep concern for the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Its chief executive, Joyce Strom, says: "Every parent having their child cared for is shaking in their boots."

The society is about to introduce a voluntary scheme to provide advice to parents and their nannies or au pairs. Other parents have been driven to more drastic action. Sales of video surveillance equipment to monitor nannies and au pairs are booming.

Marie Parente has called on European governments to prevent abuse of the au pair system: "Parents over there need to rise up and say they will not allow their children to become indentured servants in the US." — *The Observer*



On a journey through borders of hate

Since his first holidays abroad as a teenager **Gary Younge** has been aware of racism in Europe. But now, he reports, the endless petty indignities and personal slights are growing into something more menacing across the continent

IT WAS a clear, sunny day in the Dordogne when Richard came into my room with tears in his eyes and a tent under his arm. We had met in England in the spring when he had come over on a school exchange. When he was leaving he invited me back to stay with him in the summer. I had been there just three days when he stood at the door, his eyes red and swollen, to say there was a "big problem".

His father had told him he could not bear having a black person in the house. He went out to visit a friend and said he wanted me gone by the time he came back. "Tell me your thinks," said Richard, whose proficiency in English was pretty much confined to swear words I had taught him. By this time I had already started frantically packing my rucksack. I didn't know what to say.

"I think we'd better go," I said and we trudged to the campsite just out of town in pitiful silence and glorious sunshine.

I was 15 years old and it was 1984. Wham! were in the charts, the miners were on strike and a little-known party of the French hard right, the National Front (NF), had just won 11 per cent of the vote in the European elections.

Commentators claimed it was a freak occurrence, but within a few years their success was replicated across the continent. In 1989 Jorg Haider, leader of the rightwing Austrian Freedom party, was elected provincial governor of Carinthia; in 1993 the Republikaner party made sweeping gains in Germany; in 1993 the largest party in the European city of culture, Antwerp, was a fascist party, the Vlaams Blok. By 1994 Italy had fascists in the cabinet.

And each time I went back to mainland Europe things seemed to get worse. I was beaten up by the police in a Paris metro in 1991; a year earlier I had stood with my brother in a hotel reception in Barcelona and watched two white tourists get the room we had just been told was not available; a few years later I was threatened with being thrown overboard by a Flemish ferry worker for putting my feet on the chairs during an overnight crossing.

A range of petty indignities and personal violations that could have happened in Britain: but there is one major difference. Britain does not have fascists sitting in government or on local councils; parties that people go out and vote for in large numbers which are dedicated to encouraging bigotry.

The debate on race no longer revolves around repatriation. The battle over black people's right to stay in Britain has largely been won. In many European countries it is still being fought and, in most places, lost.

Today five countries in the European Union (Austria, Italy, France, Belgium, and Denmark) have parties of the hard right which enjoy more than 5 per cent of the popular vote. In many others, such as Germany, they make erratic and dramatic appearances at a regional level. As we approach the 21st century, fascism has reinvented itself as a mainstream ideology in European politics. In the words of the National Front's number two, Bruno Mégret, earlier this year: "We have brought off a great strategic victory. We are no longer demonised."

But that is not the only thing that has changed in Europe since 1984. Richard's father is now my fellow citizen in a supranational project extending from Lapland to Lisbon. We share a court of human rights, a social chapter and maybe soon a common currency. This is supposed to be my continent as much as his. But like many Britons (albeit for different reasons) I am sceptical.

The passport controller in the glass box at Marseille airport shared my suspicions. She flicked backwards and forwards through my passport several times before asking me to stand to one side while she went to have a word with her colleagues in an office.

I fear it may be my picture. Not just the fact that it has a black face on it, although that is certain to confuse. But because it has been tampered with. When passing through Rome airport a month earlier I asked an official for directions to my gate. He asked me for my passport and I handed it to him. He started trying to put his fingers underneath the laminate with my photograph in it. I went to snatch it back and told him to leave it alone. He patted his gun, told me to "calm down", and took it to the police. I managed to get it back and make it to my flight only with the help of an Air Afrique representative. "They are 50 years behind, these people. I am so sorry," he said.

Back at Marseille airport, the passport controller comes back and asks me if I have a return ticket.

"Yes," I say.

"Can I see it?" she asks.

"I don't need a return ticket to come into France," I say.

She sighs a very weary sigh. Now I am being unreasonable. I have a ticket but I won't show her it. I don't see why I should. But by this time six white European citizens have gone through in another queue. Even two Filipinos in the non-EU citizens queue have beaten me to the baggage carousel. I show her my ticket. She studies it for a moment and then waves me through.

There is a cloying, heavy heat in Provence. This is France's deep south: an area where racial conflict stretches back over generations. There are the *pieds noirs*, French settlers in Algeria who were kicked out during the war of independence; the *militants de FLN*, who fought for the liberation movement the FLN; and the *harkis*, Algerians who fought for the French against their compatriots and are now despised by both sides.

This is the National Front's heartland. Just a few kilometres away from the airport is Vitrolles, the small town which elected a National Front mayor — one of four in the area — in February 1997.

SINCE Catherine Mégret, the wife of Bruno, was elected, the town hall has been busy. It gave a "baby bonus" to "French parents" to encourage them to outbreed immigrants. Only one payment was made before [illegible] the payments illegal, and when the family found out what it was for they returned the money. It has shut down a local, municipal-sponsored youth club because it refused to play "traditional" French music. And it has changed many of the street names in order to "reaffirm Vitrolles's Provençal and French identity".

"Mégret is using Vitrolles as a testing ground," says Phillipe Lamotte of the anti-fascist organisation, Ras L'Front. "It is like a laboratory for his policies to show how he would run the country."

Vitrolles is a new town born from an "industrial zone" that drew the working-class overspill from Marseille and Paris. Soon what was a small village became surrounded by low-cost housing and soulless shopping malls. Thirty years and a few recessions later, it looks nearly new: a fraying, anodyne, municipal monument to an architectural dark age.

This is the cornerstone of European fascism's newly expanded base: the lower middle classes and small traders on the urban peripheries, people who do not have much and are afraid they might lose it; who don't know any foreigners, and don't want to.

Since the National Front came to power the atmosphere in the town has changed, says Lamotte. "There is a degree of mistrust now among people. Because most of the time you could be sitting next to someone who voted for the FN and not really know it. And the FN made great play of the crime issue, so now people think they cannot go out in the evening. The thing is, they never did go out in the evening before. But now they are afraid."

"They give people the confidence to say things they would have kept to themselves before. They can make the unacceptable commonplace," says Martine Sintas, a representative of the human rights league.

Nowhere is this more clear than in the local *lycée*, where the headteacher received Ms Megret at a school open day with a pomp previously unheard of for a visiting local dignitary, prompting demonstrations by both staff and students and the headteacher's suspension.

A few months later the Touzaline [illegible] they had lived many years before, from rural Provence. Sofia, a bright 17-year-old with sparkling wide eyes, went to the school to register for her final year so that she could sit her baccalaureat. It should have been a formality. The school was legally obliged to accept her. "I went in and told the headmistress's secretary that I wanted to sign up for the final year. She didn't say anything for a while and then she looked up, stared at me for a moment and said, 'You think you can go into the final year with a face like that?'

"I didn't move. Then she just carried on doing what she was doing. A few moments later she looked up and said: 'Are you still here?'."

She wouldn't allow Sofia to register and told her to come back in September. Sofia asked what would happen if there were no places in September. "That's your problem," the secretary said. Sofia's mother, Lila, tried to [illegible] Sofia's twin brothers she [illegible] same problem. Their father [illegible] time off work to see the [illegible] teacher and was told, "If the [illegible] my secretary said, then [illegible] her all the way."

They complained to the local authorities and got nowhere. The matter is now at appeal, whatever the outcome it will be too late for Sofia. So the young woman who was born in France, who lives five minutes from her local school, has to commute three hours a day to her old school. Her brothers, who were also refused, travel for two-and-a-half hours. If there are traffic jams or strikes they miss their classes.

"It was the first time something like that had happened to me directly," says Sofia, who wants to study international business. "When I lived in the country it was like living in a cocoon. I was the only Arab in my class. There were only three in my school. You got funny looks there but it stopped at looks. It will be the same thing when I leave school. When they see my name they will just throw my application in the bin."

I TOOK the train from Marseille along the rocky façades of the Côte d'Azur, around the thigh-high portion of Italy's boot on the Ligurian Sea, and then inland to Milan.

If Vitrolles provides a blueprint for the kind of town the fascists are taking, then Italy provides the model for how they have come to take them. The country's fascist party, the MSI (Italian Social Movement), has undergone the kind of political makeover that makes Tony Blair and New Labour look old-fashioned. In an attempt to cast off the fascist shadows it merged into a wider coalition of rightwingers calling itself the National Alliance. Its leader, Gianfranco Fini, is in favour of a European currency, believes the country should accept Kurdish asylum seekers, and wants to make a pilgrimage of remorse to Israel.

By 1994 he had three seats in cabinet and was seen as the leading standard-bearer of the right. Fini started marketing himself as a "post-fascist". The MSI MP and granddaughter of Benito Mussolini, Alessandra Mussolini, was not so sure about the "post": "If he had lived today, my grandfather would have done what Fini is doing."

Italy's fascists did make a move to the centre, but Italian society met them halfway. When it came to parties championing anti-immigration policies they have the National Alliance and the Milan-based Northern League, far more vociferous on the race issue, to choose from.

When a black woman was chosen as Miss Italy two years ago officials complained that she was "unrepresentative of Italian beauty" and the press crowned her "Miss Discord". When the English footballer Paul Ince ironically applauded a crowd hurling racist insults at Cremona he was given a yellow card.

The success of Italy's fascists is all the more remarkable given that it remains a nation of emigrants, exporting more labour to other EU countries than it imports from the rest of the world put together.

The most visible sign of non-white life in Milan is the army of street sellers offering everything from key rings to fake designer

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Borderline . . . Immigrants applying for visas in Torino, Italy

PHOTOGRAPH: PAOLO SICCARDI/KATZ

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watches. Outside the Duomo, the city's main tourist attraction, a tall, sleek Senegalese man, the colour of five past midnight, has an arm full of fake Yves Saint Laurent bags which arrived on a train from Naples. On a good day he can make $130. On a bad day, nothing. Most days are pretty bad. "Maybe I sell one or two bags. Not many, but enough to live," he says.

But his living costs are few. For the past 18 months he has been staying in one room with three other Senegalese men on the outskirts of town. He often thinks of returning to Senegal, but fears he may never have the chance to come back to Europe again. Trouble with the police is an occupational hazard, but otherwise, he says, he has no problems. "Sometimes people shout things and I know some friends who had to leave their goods and run when they were chased by Italian men. But generally it is not a problem." He does not go out at night. He does not know any Italians.

That night I went in search of food and ended up on Via Pisani at a restaurant called Al Graticiello. The woman at the door would not let me in. "We are full," she said.

She was lying. I have been refused service at far swankier places than the Al Graticiello and I know the drill. When they are booked up they will scan the diary for a space, ask you to wait for an impossible length of time, make a face and then say sorry. When there is a colour bar they will just say, "We are full," and trust that you will take the hint. I peered around the corner at the empty dining hall. "It doesn't look very full," I said.

"We are only serving in the garden," she said.

"Can I have a look in the garden then?" I asked.

"I told you we are full," she said and testily moved from behind her desk as if to prevent my entrance.

"I know, but I don't believe you," I said and walked away.

IT TOOK around six hours to get from Milan to Innsbruck, in Austria. The train climbed through the mountains of the south Tyrol, as blankets of thick cloud descended ever lower over hills of pines and, as we drew closer, turned to rain. Border guards dropped by on the way. I was the only black person in the carriage and the only person whose passport they were interested in. Two of them, soon to be aided by a third, studied it with a mixture of curiosity and disbelief and then handed it back while I tried to look bored.

Between these two countries, both covered by the Schengen accord, these controls should be a thing of the past. But, when it comes to race, a Europe without borders clearly has its limits.

Even in the rain Innsbruck is a town fit for a chocolate box, squeezed between the northern chain of the Alps and the Tuxer mountain range to the south. Unlike how Sonny (not his real name), a 34-year-old Ghanaian, got there is a long story that starts in the Libyan desert.

Sonny, who joined the Ghanaian army at the age of 12, was part of a battalion seconded to the Libyan government to fight the Chadians. He ran away, first to Malta, where he bought a Kenyan passport, then to Yugoslavia and finally to Hungary. There he paid a local man $200 to smuggle him, along with about 50 Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, over the Austrian border. They were caught by border police. He ripped up his forged passport so they would have no idea where he came from. Soon afterwards he escaped. He then claimed, and was granted, political asylum in Austria.

"I couldn't do it now because the rules are too strict, but I couldn't go back to Ghana after I had left the army," he says. When he first arrived in Austria things were bad. "People used to shout at me in the street: 'Hey nigger' . . . 'Hey monkey man', and there were always problems with the police. They still shout sometimes, and occasionally Austrian men try to start something. But I can't do anything because if there was a fight I would be blamed and once you are in trouble with the police they can expel you. So I only say something when little children shout at me."

Today he works on a building site with Turks and Czechs and lives a bachelor's life, chasing women, drinking beer with his friends from Togo and sending money home to his family. He has been in Austria 10 years but can only vote in local elections.

Sonny and his workmates represent both the European right's greatest ammunition and its greatest paradox. He is an economic migrant, ostensibly taking jobs from unemployed Austrians. But few Austrians want the sort of casualised, low-skilled, low-paid work he has. He recognises that the Austrian economy needs him as much as he needs it: "Austrians wouldn't do my work. It is too dirty and the pay is too bad. It is OK for me because I have no family here, but even when there is unemployment they wouldn't do it."

FROM Innsbruck to Munich is commuting distance, two hours past the mountain tops and into the hilly, green expanses of Bavaria. Ali, who was born in the region, feels about as German as Sonny does Austrian: "My parents came here in the sixties and I've been here all my life. But here, if you are born to immigrants, you will die an immigrant. It doesn't matter if you've read Goethe, wear lederhosen and do a Bavarian dance, they'll still treat you like an immigrant." Germany has one of the most prohibitive immigration laws in Europe based on the principle that only those with "German blood" have an automatic right to citizenship. Those born there face huge obstacles to gaining their rights.

"Immigration law is one of the biggest problems in the country," says Dr Chong Suk Kang of Munich's equivalent of the Community Relations Council. "There is a whole generation of young people who were born here and who have never even been to Turkey or Morocco or wherever but who have no stake in this society."

During the two days I was in Munich I was asked twice for my papers while walking through the underground of the main station at night. Both times I said that I was English and did not have my passport, then baffled them by offering an American driver's licence and a journalists' card. Both times they grunted and let me go.

I returned to Marseille by train the way I had come. I stopped in Nice on the way and met an English football supporter in a bar. The conversation skipped, under his guidance, from England's chances in the World Cup to Arabs in France to blacks in Britain.

"I live in Southall and it's sweet. Some of them can be a bit pushy, you know, wanting special favours, bringing over their families and all that, but mostly it's all right," he said. "I think the asylum seekers are taking the piss, though . . . I think it's time we looked after ourselves for once."

I was on my way back to a racism that at least I understood.

Can we afford to save babies who are tragically premature, asks **Michael Berwyn-Jones**

Life's born losers

WITH hospitals facing closure, services being curtailed and waiting times extended, Britain's National Health Service is facing some tough rationing decisions. One of the most emotive and sensitive involves low birth-weight babies (below 1.5kg).

Both the public and, naturally, the parents of low-weight babies pay tribute to the heroic efforts of modern medical teams. But those efforts, which cost up to $150,000 per baby, tragically produce some of the most distressing outcomes.

Is mercy not being misplaced when many attempts have fatal or crippling results, and when most of the babies, if left to nature, would miscarry before even being conscious of their own existence? Complicated procedures have been devised for trying to preserve premature offspring that nature did not intend should survive. Although sometimes successful, the procedures have, paradoxically, resulted in increased numbers of children with serious illnesses and handicaps, according to research in the United States.

Such salvage is hazardous and immoral, and is made surreal by contrived abortions being sanctioned in the same hospital. It also arouses emotions that cloud the reason and judgment of parents and public alike.

A study of all babies — nearly 500,000 — born in the north of England between 1983 and 1994 focused on those with a gestation of only 22 to 28 weeks. At 22 weeks, none survived their first year; at 23 weeks, only eight of 197 (4 per cent) survived for a year. The rate improved for each extra week, until almost half those of 27 weeks' gestation were still alive at the end of their first year. But 24 per cent of those surviving a year or more were severely disabled.

Half of those under 600g at birth die, and up to half the survivors suffer one or more handicaps, such as cerebral palsy, blindness, deafness, mental retardation, epilepsy, chronic lung disease, learning disabilities, or attention deficit disorder. There remains the unknown cost and distress to parents of those permanently disabled babies.

When the rate of very low-weight births is increasing, one must question the sense of deploying such vast resources for such doubtful results.

An immediate solution would be to set birth-weight limits for initiating intensive care, while putting more money into researching the causes of pre-term births, to try to prevent them.

Manipulating this and other aspects of human reproduction just because the technology exists is questionable. It disregards cost, hazard and hereditary consequences — even if the latter remain to be revealed.

One example of hereditary consequences came to light 10 years ago when staff at St Mary's hospital, London, traced the defective gene responsible for cystic fibrosis to a single ancestor. About 2 million people who carry the gene in Britain and another 10 million in Europe and the US are all related. The result in Britain alone is that about 400 affected babies are born each year, requiring special diets and intensive physiotherapy several times a day to keep their lungs working. Most die before they are 30.

Our technical brilliance is taking the evasion of natural selection to ridiculous extremes, and wastes vast sums trying to keep alive the most desperately afflicted whose lives are a torment to them and their carers.

Another misplaced mercy is the costly business of helping those unable to have children naturally to do so. When successful, the artificial provision of viable eggs or sperm or both (as embryos) merely satisfies selfish desires which are unwanted in a world whose population has more than doubled since 1950 to more than 5.8 billion.

About one in six couples seeks help in overcoming infertility, a condition aggravated by a decline in sperm counts of 40 per cent since the second world war and continuing to fall at the rate of 2 per cent per year.

Nature does not allow other living things to breed from barren or otherwise defective stock. It is selfish, feeble, immoral and nonsensical not to accept sterilisation if we know we have faulty genes or do not want progeny.

A step in the right direction is that increasing numbers of young women are choosing to be sterilised for the freedom it gives them to pursue careers, independence and sex without fear of pregnancy.

Thoughtless breeders should beware. Insurance companies are already using genetic tests to calculate extra premiums for those with faulty genes. Also, one son in the US is already reported to be suing his parents for the lousy set of genes bequeathed him.

Contrarily, we read headlines praising new techniques: such as "Sperm Test Brings Hope to Childless Men", reporting the discovery by researchers at the University of California in San Francisco of a means of reviving immobile sperm (previously assumed dead) for in vitro fertilisation.

Research should be redirected to preventing those likely to pass on distressing or dangerous defects from doing so. While caring fully for those already afflicted, we should also be educating them and/or their stewards about the possible riskiness of propagating their afflictions without first consulting a geneticist.

Sadly, it seems most of us can only bleat about the pity and complexity of it all, then hop back into bed to continue our favourite activity — careless of consequences, and glad to be rewarded with a welfare bonus for each child produced.

Michael Berwyn-Jones formerly worked in research and development for two pharmaceutical companies

Raining butterflies . . . but patterns on the wings may hide winning lottery numbers PHOTO: CARLOS LOZANO

Colombians bet on a plague of butterflies

IT COULD be a passage from the Colombian Nobel literature laureate and grandfather of magic realism Gabriel García Márquez, *writes Jeremy Lennard.*

The sugar-growing town of San Antonio de los Caballeros has been taken over by swarms of giant, shimmering blue and brown butterflies.

"You can't open your mouth for fear they'll fly right in," said Marina Llano, who keeps a shop.

Driving has become almost impossible — there are so many butterflies in the air that they smother windscreens and block radiator grilles — and few venture out on foot without a large umbrella.

The village school has had to close temporarily for lack of students and dogs normally content to laze in the tropical heat snap their jaws on thin air.

Butterflies have settled in irreverently large numbers on the statues of the Virgin and Christ on the cross in the church. The town's patron, Saint Antony, is all but obscured.

Caligo ilioneus has a 10cm wingspan and is not an unusual sight at this time of year, when it breeds on the sugar cane. But no one has seen anything like this. "They seem to have thrived in the unusual weather conditions brought on by El Niño," said Luis Gómez, an entomologist.

Although the butterflies are a headache for sugar growers, there is a local superstition that they have winning lottery numbers hidden in the patterns on their wings.

The first hint of this year's plague came nearly at the end of last month when Horacio Loaiza was engulfed by a cloud of pulsating blue as he cycled home from a day's cane cutting. "I was overwhelmed. I had never seen so many potential lottery winners," he said.

When he got home, coated in blue dust and broken wings, he found his windows covered in butterflies and his wife picking them out of the soup.

"The town has had to resort to [illegible] now leave lights off until late at night so as not to attract more," Mrs Loaiza said. "But the butterflies are also fond of coming to rest on television screens, which is causing much consternation now the World Cup is under way."

Ana Beltran, who works in the lottery office, confirms that she has had a bumper month. "Nobody has ever won the jackpot on a butterfly before," she whispered. "But please don't tell the public that."

Letter from Mali Robert Lacville

Petticoat power

ADAMA DRABO'S film Taafe Fanga has entered Malian folklore. Taafe is the word for the two metres of cotton that West African women wrap around their waists. Fanga means "power".

At the beginning of Drabo's film, we see men beating their women and forcing them to carry out the heavy tasks, even going off to face the dangers of the night to collect wood for the cooking fire. The women revolt, and we find ourselves in the hilarious situation (especially hilarious for West African audiences) where women wear the trousers and carry the symbolic paraphernalia of the hunters' initiation rites while the men learn to cook and carry babies on their backs.

There is nothing more comical than a line of bearded elders smoking their pipes and wearing skirts. And there is nothing more incongruous than to see these elders-in-skirts arriving at the sacred cave where they keep the ancestral juju fetishes and watch over the spiritual well-being of the community, to find that they cannot have a meeting because the women have moved in.

Drabo sets his film in the picturesque cliffs of Dogon country, where you find some of Africa's most spectacular masks and dances — and tourists. Dogon cosmogony fascinates anthropologists both in Africa and abroad. Western scientists have a burning need to explain everything: if they cannot "prove" something, then they consider that it doesn't exist (in contradiction to the very concept of inquiry).

So far no scientist has been able to explain how Dogon elders have known about the star Sirius for a thousand years, whereas Western astronomers only "discovered" it 50 years ago. It is the penetrating Dogon view of the world which Drabo uses to develop his story of petticoat power. For the Dogons believe in "constructive conflict", considering that new order arises from disorder.

In the film, a woman called Timbélé is forced to go off at night to search for firewood, since her husband didn't bring any back with him from the fields. No sensible person wanders at night, especially near these mysterious cliffs where spirits maraud. Sure enough, the spirits appear. Timbélé is terrified — who wouldn't be? I was terrified sitting in my seat in the cinema — but she fights back and captures a fearsome mask.

It is the arrival of the mask that provokes disorder in the village: the women control the power of the mask and reduce the men to impotence (both physically and spiritually). It is difficult to be a virile man when you have to wear a skirt and do the cooking (and therefore eat terrible food).

The impotence of the men doesn't suit the members of either sex. A new order is established in which "complementarity" replaces subordination, and the whole population agrees that they should be "equal in their differences". Which is a very African form of consensus-building.

I went to see Adama Drabo project Taafe Fanga on the first anniversary of its presentation at the 1997 Ouagadougou film festival in Burkina Faso. He recounted how, as he was walking home one evening in Bamako, he heard a teenage girl say to her boyfriend: "No I shall not bring you a glass of tea. If you want it, come and get it."

INSTEAD of insulting her, the boyfriend laughed, saying: "Aha, I feel the breeze of Taafe Fanga!" Whereupon he got off his scooter, crossed to the pavement tea ceremony under a mango tree and graciously presented his girlfriend with a glass of green mint tea.

Adama told me how moving it felt to witness the story of his film changing Bamako street culture. But it is not just in the street that Taafe Fanga has influence. I was sitting in front of the family bowl, now empty of rice with peanut sauce. Maman asked if I would like to drink after eating, and beckoned to my younger sister to fetch water. (The African Princess is my "sister" in Malian language, now that I have been adopted into the family.)

The Princess was looking exhausted and suffering from toothache, so I rose to fetch the water myself.

"Sit down," said Maman sharply. "It is your small sister who should fetch the water."

I smiled. "Ah Maman, you know that I would never contradict your wishes. But today my sister is suffering from toothache; so today we will follow the rule of Taafe Fanga."

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

A RADIO pundit forecast that globalisation would, in time, lead to only 20 per cent of the population being employed and the rest living in poverty. Is his prediction realistic?

FORTUNATELY, there is no direct link between the level of technology and unemployment. Since the Industrial Revolution, the unemployment rate in Britain has varied from practically zero to more than 15 per cent, but has shown no signs of permanent rise. This is despite enormous changes to technology and the nature of production. However, global inequality has been around for a long time already. — *Gavin Cameron, Oxford*

WHAT is the average total cost of an MP?

THE forgetting of the past, the statistical mythology of the present, and the eternal promise of the golden future. Oh, and lashings of empty, directionless cynicism. — *Adam Bartlett, Bangalow, NSW, Australia*

THE totals given for those killed by Stalin, etc include deaths from starvation as a result of policy. Famines were not unusual in Britain's Indian empire, so can any of our imperial figures be counted among history's mass murderers?

JOHN Wilson is absolutely wrong to allege that British rule in India was deliberately responsible for the Bengal Famine of 1942 (June 14). The main cause was the loss of imported Burmese rice following the Japanese invasion of that country. The shortage caused a rise in rice prices, and hoarding. The Bengal government tried two tactics: threats of action against hoarders, and the importing of wheat grain from the Punjab as a substitute crop. Neither succeeded. — *A Bailes, Stoke-on-Trent*

THE CHINESE drink no milk, so how do they avoid osteoporosis?

IT IS a common misconception that dairy products are necessary for protection against brittle bones in later years. Many green leaf vegetables and nuts (especially almonds) are excellent sources of calcium. What's more, since these are vegetable-based minerals, they are better absorbed by the human body than their animal-based counterparts found in milk. Finally, scientists have found that excess protein in one's diet — especially from animals — impedes calcium absorption and thus compels the human organism to drain the calcium reserved in, yes, the bones. Little wonder that osteoporosis is most rampant in countries which consume large quantities of red meat, namely the United States and Northern Europe. — *Mariano Torras, New York, USA*

Any answers

"SHE'LL be coming round the mountain when she comes," promises the old song. Who was she? Which mountain? Did she ever arrive? — ***Jim Black, Chimoio, Mozambique***

WHAT is it about an ant's anatomy which enables it to so efficiently sniff out sugary food from a distance? Is it possible to block this receptivity? — ***Robert Flint, Yanbu, Saudi Arabia***

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ.

A Country Diary

A Harry Griffin

THE HOWGILL FELLS: You may see other walkers midweek in the southern Howgills, approached from around Sedbergh, but not in the northern half, south from the Tebay to Kirkby Stephen road. Even better, you can still walk on grass in these lonely hills. The bird-song, too, can be delightful — most often curlew, plover and skylark, sometimes redshank. On a recent sunny but pleasantly fresh day we did one of the best rounds in these parts — the circumnavigation of Weasdale by way of Hooksey, Randygill Top and Green Bell. Apart from one steepish bit, it is six miles or so of easy going — an ideal round for octogenarians with foot problems. If you go anti-clockwise, you go up the steepish bit but you finish down the lovely slopes of Green Bell — the easiest finish to any mountain walk I know. About 200 feet down the slope of Green Bell to the northeast is the source, near an old sheepfold, of the tortuous River Lune. Even more interesting was the discovery that tens of thousands of some sort of caterpillar were scurrying around where we were seated on the top of Stockless, while, a couple of hundred yards away, several thousand seagulls were devouring their companions. But this could not distract us from the superb view of the Lakeland fells, several of the highest Yorkshire hills and the prominent limestone "clouds" on Wild Boar Fell. If you seek quietude in the hills this is a likely place to try.

etting straight to the pointe

DAN…
Judi… ackrell

THE Royal Ballet may have been celebrating its founder's 100th birthday a few days late, but Ninette de Valois could have found much in last week's show at which to wave her notoriously admonitory walking stick. Not only was most of the evening devoted to her choreography, but the company looked as crisply rehearsed as she could want.

The first night audience was full of ex-dancers and lifelong fans, yet the fond nostalgia which gently misted up the auditorium was mixed with the curiosity of younger generations. For de Valois's work is rarely performed and the programming of The Rake's Progress with extracts from seven of her other works gave fascinating views of her style.

The British temper of de Valois's imagination is well known; less so is her devotion to the 18th century. It's not just the 18th century of Hogarth, so deftly captured in Rake, but also that era of London theatre and ballet and the classical-pastoral of poetry and opera.

Stylistically, too, her astringently detailed steps and characterisation, her tightly economised structures, and her shying away from big romantic themes reflect her affiliation with the period.

But de Valois was also a woman of her own theatre, and her work is a vigorous mix of both period and contemporary modes. So while Rake, for instance, may start out as a Hogarthian costume drama — rich in Fielding-esque character studies — it turns into something like mid-European Expressionism.

Half way through, the tightly sewn steps and gestures which clothe the characters are suddenly unbuttoned to let their psyches escape. Stuart Cassidy, who begins his Rake's career looking saturnine and over-indulged, becomes, in the prison scene, a twisted, sagging creature from whom sense and civilisation have been gutted. Sarah Wildor as the Betrayed Girl also marvellously transforms a fluttery, lachrymose victim into a study of real heartbreak. Rake isn't a ballet anyone could make today — but it's well worth revisiting.

The excerpted ballets were introduced by those who had originally performed them or close associates of de Valois. Peter Wright, introducing Satan's solo from Job, recalled her saying that if the Royal Ballet ever revived this she'd like "that Russian" to dance Satan. "He might have it in him." She meant Irek Mukhamedov, and he did — his powerful body supercharged with hubris and pain.

Beryl Grey introduced Darcey Bussell, whom she'd coached as the Black Queen in Checkmate — bringing together two of the longest pairs of legs in ballet.

And Wayne Sleep could barely restrain his feet from sliding into a soft shoe shuffle as he introduced a younger version of himself, Matthew Dibble, in the solo Every Goose Can.

The evening closed with Ashton's Birthday Offering, which should have been a showy display of ballerina talent. Unfortunately several of the first cast were injured, and the ballet is in serious need of a re-design — some things period are best forgotten. But Sylvie Guillem and Jonathan Cope glittered with mischief in the big *pas de deux*. Bussell melted through her solo and Muriel Valtat produced the speediest, most silvery footwork I've seen from her. The show did Madam proud.

Heart-breaking in grief, terrific in rage . . . Anna Caterina Antonacci as Rodelinda PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE HOBAN

Divine diva strikes all the right notes

OPERA
Tim Ashley

CIGARETTES, they say, are bad for the voice. This seems not to deter the Italian bass Umberto Chiummo, cast as Garibaldo in Rodelinda, who lights up at the beginning of one of his arias, puffs away while singing some of Handel's trickier coloratura, then, during his cadenza, proceeds to blow smoke in the face of his hapless sidekick Unulfo, played by Artur Stefanowicz. It's one staggering moment in a staggering evening — and one of the few points in Jean-Marie Villégier's brilliant, unnerving production for Glyndebourne when we're allowed to laugh openly.

Some will doubtless blanch at the idea of someone smoking in a Handel opera, and it should be said that this is not a show for purists, even though Villégier's credentials as a producer of Baroque theatre are impeccable. On the other hand, he's got to the heart of the piece, namely that the characters are essentially *monstres sacrés*, icons of emotional extremism in a world where everything is dominated by a quest for supremacy. To some of the most beautiful music ever written, they sing about "the power of love", but what drives them is the love of power.

Politics is everything. Sex is a matter of either attempted rape or opportunistic screwing. Even the supposedly virtuous are not above moral suspicion: the vanquished Bertarido puts out a false report of his own death, then returns to spy on his "widow's" grief and question her fidelity; Rodelinda, in her attempt to defeat the usurper Grimoaldo, bids him reach the lower depths of his infamy by killing her son in front of her.

Villégier transplants these terrible people from the 18th century to the chilly inter-war world, where art deco and fascism meet dangerously. The programme book suggests the films of Erich Von Stroheim as the main design reference, and the black, white and grey costumes, strongly accentuated make-up and stylised, emphatic gestures derive from silent movies. Garibaldo wears Stroheim's uniform from Foolish Wives. Eduige, swathed in velvet wraps, looks like the sadomasochistic Regina from Queen Kelly. Rodelinda's costumes suggest Gloria Swanson in diva mode. Bertarido, in his moment of heroism, dons Fairbanks's Zorro mask.

Elsewhere, however, we are closer to Craig Raine's 1953 and the recent film of Richard III with Ian McKellan's Mosley-ish king. In this world, everyday accoutrements are riddled with as much danger as the greatcoat-clad guards who strut round the set. Tea trolleys conceal knives; guns are hidden in baskets of flowers. Much of it is frightening, some of it is funny, but the laughter remains harsh throughout and the ending is chilling. The principals calmly pour champagne and toast the audience in a show of reconciliation, but we know that the moment the curtain comes down, the power games will start again.

Musically, it's stunning. The opera needs six great singers, and Glyndebourne has found them. Anna Caterina Antonacci and Andreas Scholl, in particular, dominate as Rodelinda and Bertarido. Heartbreaking in grief and terrific in rage, Antonacci has film-icon looks, the grace of a ballerina and a fabulous, smoky voice capable of great flexibility and richness of expression. Scholl, making a long-delayed operatic debut, is far and away the greatest of contemporary countertenors. The sound can only be described as heart-stopping, and his phrasing is exquisite. His duet with Antonacci at the end of the second act ranks as one of the most ravishing things I've ever heard.

The beat goes on and on

CINEMA
Gaby Wood

ON DECEMBER 30, 1950, when Jack Kerouac was in the depths of writer's block, he received a letter from his friend Neal Cassady. It was long — 13,000 words by some accounts, 23,000 by others. The letter was, Kerouac said, "the greatest story" he'd ever read by an American writer, a "novelette" that "outmatched" Céline, Wolfe, Dostoevsky, Joyce. Kerouac claimed it marked the beginning of an American Renaissance, and it has been said that without Cassady's letter modern classics like In Cold Blood and The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test would never have been written.

This is the letter on which The Last Time I Committed Suicide is based. The film is steeped in hip nostalgia. Thomas Jane, in his first starring role, plays Neal with the suaveness of a true beat disciple. Keanu Reeves is here, in an indie film, supporting him (as Neal's friend Harry), and delivering his lines like he's quoting someone better than himself.

Sylph-like, almond-eyed Claire Forlani plays Joan, the girl who's too good for Neal, and thinks she's not good enough. There's a bebop soundtrack and sixties credits — black and white letters on black and white shapes. The main forties' setting is in glowing colour, not looking like the forties as they were, or even as they are imagined now, but richer and glossier and delusional, the way they were remembered in fifties' musicals.

Although the film looks great, the enchantment wears off quite quickly (right around the time Keanu Reeves appears, in fact, and after the third or fourth arty shot of pool balls being whacked across a sea of green). You feel that there's a limited scope, that nothing happens, it's just good-looking guys in bars — and pool halls and stolen cars — smoking and drinking and dredging up girls like leftovers. But actually the plot is not without incident — there are hospitals and prisons and sex and suicide attempts. There's even a tragic ending — the kind self-absorbed boys think is tragic.

You wonder if the problem is that it's based on a letter and not a book, but the film's real problem is its undentable love of the world it shows. It's more of a hymn than a movie.

The Last Time I Committed Suicide is better as a concept than as a realised work. The same could be said of the letter on which the film is founded. Only part of the "Joan Anderson letter", as it came to be called, survives. But reading it is a disappointment (with lines like "O sad shock, O unpleasant time"), and you begin to wish none had survived at all, that the mythic letter of Kerouac's exalted opinion was all there was.

When he received it, Kerouac had published his first book, The Town And The City, but could not think where to go from there. If Kerouac admired Cassady's writing, he was in awe of his life.

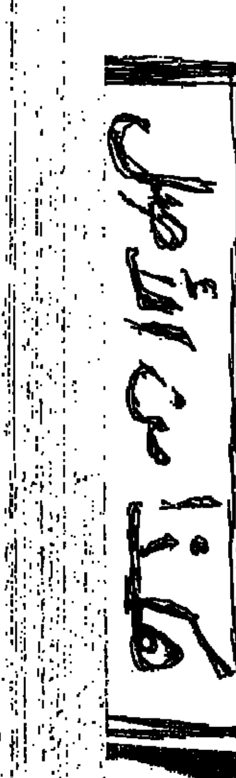
Cassady was born on the way to Los Angeles. His parents soon split up, and Cassady spent his childhood with his father, moving from place to place. He had stolen 500 cars before he was 21. His sex life started when he was nine; he spent 15 months in reform school and longer in jail, yet he read Kant and Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. When he wrote about his life he claimed to be reporting "just the incidents exactly as they occurred". "Melville", Kerouac said, "was never truer."

THERE were times when Kerouac felt so under Cassady's influence he could hardly mention his name. "The Joan Anderson letter" inspired Kerouac to write more spontaneous prose. He emerged from his block, and in the following year wrote On The Road (it wasn't published until 1956), thinking of it as a long letter, and basing its hero on Cassady.

The spirit of Neal Cassady comes across well in the film, which illustrates the events in the letter, and recounts some of them in a voiceover. There are things that writer-director Stephen Kay has added, or fused with other stories, and the concoction has clearly been a labour of love. Thomas Jane plays Neal as a trendy, muscular, almost sculptural guy, with film stars in his brain and more than a few chinks in his armour. Cassady's friend Lawrence Ferlinghetti described him as "a speeded-up Paul Newman in The Hustler".

One can imagine audiences for whom this would be a dream of a film — it's young and fast, a legend come to life. But you don't have to be old and stuffy to think it's a one-liner. If halfway through you feel you can't take any more, it's not because it's immoral or chauvinist, it's because it's boring.

Richard Williams is in France covering the World Cup



Old masters of the sky

Mark Cocker



ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

TO THE north of the city of Caceres we stopped to enjoy the landscape of this arid and sepia-toned region of Spain. A rolling tableland fell away in a succession of distant folds, and across the flank of the nearest tawny slope sheep were grazing quietly without distraction. All would have looked a perfect spring scene except the warm breeze carried towards us an unmistakable odour of decay.

One of the flock had died, but despite the bareness of the hillside we never saw the carcass since it was surrounded by a circular mass of vultures. And each minute that we watched, fresh birds sailed down from the heavens, the wind spilling from their two-metre wings in an audible rush of air. On the ground there was such a seething crowd of bodies that an accurate count was impossible. However, we estimated about 120 birds.

The majority of them were griffon vultures, birds of such aerial mastery that they can cover up to 450 kilometres a day in search of a scene like this one. In surging down on a kill they can reach speeds of 140km/h. Yet as the vultures cruised in to land, their wings were almost completely closed at the moment of touchdown and just a few bouncing steps brought the manoeuvre to a total halt.

It was a consummate performance that couldn't have been more contrasting with the untidy mêlée that ensued. At the periphery of the circle stood scores of "candidates", hungry birds whose aggression may well be triggered by the release of digestive juices.

Once the urge to feed overwhelmed these "candidates" they scrambled and jostled to the centre, where occasionally birds would leap on their rival's back and attack with feet raised and neck extended. But these are largely ritual exchanges that cause little harm to participants, and they ensure a constant rota at the carcass that allows many to take their turn.

The griffon vultures were splendid creatures, but their close relative, the black vulture, was more impressive still. It is the biggest bird of prey in Eurasia. A large female can weigh more than 12kg and has a wingspan of almost three metres. On the ground they look extraordinary. Around the long bare neck is a collar of shaggy feathers that stands up like a courtier's ruff, yet the head itself is pale and bare except for an area of black feathering around each eye. At a distance this looks like two dark hollows scooped out of a naked skull. The whole effect is a kind of ghoulish majesty.

On an African safari, congregations of vultures are almost daily events, but in Europe they are much more special. Since the Middle Ages griffon and especially black vultures have steadily been edged out of many countries — from Germany, Poland, Romania and much of southern France. Spain is now their last great stronghold, where the population of griffons almost doubled to 8,000 pairs by 1990, while Extremadura holds some of the largest concentrations of black vultures found anywhere in the world.

In Europe as a whole their presence defines the continent's last wild places — usually landscapes of vast extent, with few human inhabitants and where the grazing animals (and even the people themselves) seem to live more freely and die sometimes unnoticed.

Vultures mark the parameters of my travel interest in Europe. Their absence, and all it implies, keeps me away from most northern countries and even from the Italian peninsula, with its cultural feast of museums and churches. But I'm seldom deterred. And who would deny that a soaring vulture is one of God's great works of art?

Chess Leonard Barden

AFTER just four seasons Britain's Four Nations Chess League (4NCL) is fast maturing into a serious challenger to its long-established rivals in Germany, France and the Netherlands. Virtually all the UK's leading grandmasters take part.

The 1997-98 champions, for the second year running, were Midland Monarchs, who mix experienced local GMs with some of the brightest young university talent; thus the league provides serious impetus for Britain's chess future.

GMs relish the chance to meet high-quality opposition at leisurely time rates. An innovatory rule requiring at least one woman player per team has also been successful.

There have been some glitches. No Scottish team has yet taken part because of the problems of travel to Birmingham six times a season. Hopes that a sponsor would provide prize money and backing for top teams who qualify for the European Cup have also come to nothing.

In the past season 4NCL and the European Cup have both had their share of controversy. The 4NCL season began without chess sets or boards, a non-playing Austrian captain was sent off in the Eurocup for poking an opponent in the back, and a 2600 GM walked out after a dispute with his manager. Everybody gets heated, but these incidents will make wonderful conversation pieces at chess parties in 10 years' time.

GM Mark Hebden (Midlands) v IM Colin Crouch (Barbican)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 Bf5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 Qb3 Qb6 7 Qxb6 axb6 8 Nc3 e6 9 Bb5+ Nfd7 10 Ne5 Bd6 11 Nxd7 Nxd7 12 Bd2 Kd8 13 0-0 Nf6 14 f3 Bg6 15 Rfc1 Ne8 16 Na4 Bc7 17 Bb4 f5 18 f4 Bh5 19 Rc2 g5 20 fxg5 h6 21 g6 Bxg6 22 Be1 f4 23 Nxb6 Resigns.

GM Mikhail Gurevich (Slough) v Charles Kennaugh (Guildford)

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Bb4 3 Nd5 a5 4 Nf3 e4 5 a3 c6 6 axb4 cxd5 7 Nd4 dxc4 8 d3 Qb6 9 dxc4 Qxb4+ 10 Bd2 Qc5 11 Nb5 Ne7 12 Be3 Qb4+ 13 Qd2 ... 14 Nd6+ Kf8 15 Rxa5 Qxd2 ... Kxd2 Nc6 17 Ra4 Ke7 18 c5 N... g4 Ke6 20 Bg2 Rb8 21 Rc1 g6 ... f5 23 Rcxb4 Nxb4 24 Rxb... Rb6 Ke5 26 Nc4+ Resigns ... Kd5 27 b3 and 28 Rd6 mate.

No 2529

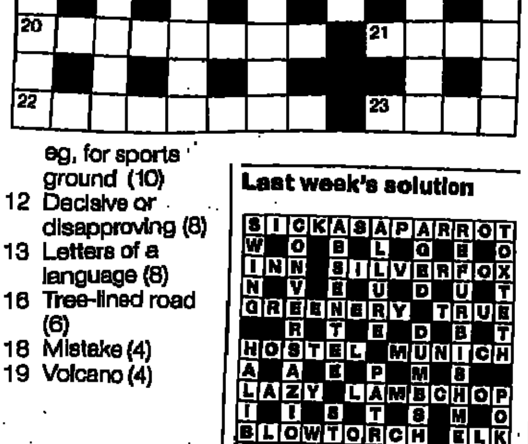
White mates in two moves, with four solutions, by C J Feather, said the caption in the March issue of The Problemist. With 10 minutes to spare and knowing that Chris Feather is the UK's leading helpmate composer, I decided to improve my lateral thinking and find at least one answer.

In helpmates, Black moves first, then both sides combine to allow White to checkmate on his second turn. So two black moves and two white needed, but in reverse order from normal problems. Let's try black playing hxg3, g2 and Qd... while White plays Qb3 and Qxd... mate. Bother, that's three black moves. So can we work *1 (black move)* Qe3 2 fxe3 followed by mating with the WQ at f2? No, it takes far too many moves.

After nearly half an hour and missing my train, I stumbled on one of the four solutions and eventually worked out the other three answers. They're easy once you get the hang of it, but if you are an over-the-board player you do need lateral thinking.

No 2528: 1 Nh6!! a2 (if Rxh6 2 a8Q) 2 Rg7+ and Black's king can never escape from checks on the g file.

Quick crossword no. 424



Across

1 Swelling — collision (4)
3 Goods and chattels (8)
8 Twilight (4)
9 Tacit (8)
11 Sewing (10)
14 Liquid measure (6)
15 All for (anag) (6)
17 Type of knot (5,5)
20 Person who goes to law (8)
21 Blackleg (4)
22 Roost for Christmas partridge? (4,4)
23 Stain (on landscape?) (4)

Down

1 Raillery (8)
2 Showing skill and control (8)
4 Fame (6)
5 Oil rig that met disaster (5,5)
6 Roué (4)
7 American (4)
10 Illumination eg, for sports ground (10)
12 Decisive or disapproving (8)
13 Letters of a language (8)
16 Tree-lined road (6)
18 Mistake (4)
19 Volcano (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE charismatic Dutch player Bob Slavenburg was larger than life in every sense. Six and a half feet tall, he could perform tricks at the table that Ronaldo would love to emulate on the football pitch for Brazil. In a World Championship, he once made a contract of two spades doubled when his opponents were cold for a grand slam — in spades! I'll show you that hand soon.

Today, we'll look at a deal that Slavenburg played in the 1967 Sunday Times tournament — now the Macallan.

Love all, dealer West:

North
♠ K74
♥ KJ73
♦ KQ84
♣ 104

West
♠ Q962
♥ 84
♦ AJ72
♣ Q63

East
♠ AJ853
♥ None
♦ 10953
♣ K852

South
♠ 10
♥ AQ109652
♦ 6
♣ AJ97

This was the bidding:

South	West	North	East
Slavenburg		Kreijns	
	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♥	2♠	4♥	4♠
5♥	Double	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Note Slavenburg's calculated underbid of 2♥ — a lesser player would have bid 4♥, then not known what to do when 4♠ was passed back to him. As a result South's wild distribution was concealed from the opponents.

West led the two of spades. Slavenburg, who did not want a club switch from East, went up with dummy's king to make a spade continuation easy for the defenders. East won the ace of spades and returned the suit, Slavenburg ruffing. He led his singleton diamond towards the dummy, but West was awake and went in with his ace of diamonds. Ruffing the third round of spades, Slavenburg ran all his trumps! That's right — he did not cash the king and queen of diamonds in dummy, because he could discard only two of his club losers, and would have one left at the finish. Instead, he cashed the heart suit, forcing the opponents to discard. This was the end position before the last trump was played:

North
♠ None
♥ None
♦ KQ8
♣ 104

West
♠ None
♥ None
♦ J72
♣ Q6

East
♠ None
♥ None
♦ 1095
♣ K8

South
♠ None
♥ 2
♦ None
♣ AJ97

Pity poor East and West. Both, convinced that Slavenburg must have another diamond, clung grimly to their three remaining cards in that suit. This meant, of course, each of them discarded a club, coming down to a single honour in that suit. So Slavenburg made not one diamond trick — but his ♣AJ97 took the last four tricks to bring home the doubled game.

Football World Cup: Romania 2 England 1

England lose to last-gasp strike

David Lacey in Toulouse

SUDDENLY England look vulnerable. Monday night's 2-1 defeat by Romania in the Municipal Stadium here has not in itself dealt a mortal blow to the chances of Glenn Hoddle's team reaching the knock-out stage of the World Cup, but the manner of it posed serious questions about their ability to progress further.

England still only need to draw with Colombia in Lens on Friday to reach the second round on goal difference, a task that should not be beyond them, although on this week's evidence in Montpellier the 36-year-old Carlos Valderrama still has the ability to destroy opponents with an inspired pass. The most significant aspect of Monday night's result is that Romania, whose last match in the first round is with Tunisia, look like heading Group G.

Should that happen, England would probably find themselves facing Argentina, the likely winners of Group H, in St Etienne on June 30 for a place in the quarter-finals. That would be bad news for Hoddle's players, who showed their lack of World Cup experience against Romania with the defence at fault on both goals.

From an English point of view the ... was cruel. Having lost the ... Paul Ince before half-time they fell behind to a goal from Viorel Moldovan immediately after. Then Michael Owen, having replaced the labouring Teddy Sheringham, responded to his cue by bringing the score level seven minutes from the end amid goalmouth confusion caused by Alan Shearer's hard-driven low cross.

A draw had been widely predicted — indeed the last four meetings between England and Romania had been drawn — and a point each would have left both teams reasonably satisfied. But as the match moved into stoppage time a pass from Dorinel Munteanu sent in Dan Petrescu from the left.

Graeme Le Saux, his Chelsea team-mate, came across to make a challenge more clumsy than effective, and Petrescu managed to slip the winning goal through Seaman's legs as the England goalkeeper fell backwards. In a sadistic final twist there was still time for Owen to hit a post as England sought salvation.

Hoddle has persevered with playing three at the back. Holding Italy in a goalless game in Rome seemed the ultimate vindication of the England coach's move away from 4-4-2. Now doubt will arise about his formation, especially given the increasing number of times Romania found space down the flanks.

While you could not argue with Hoddle's assertion that "two sloppy goals were given away", Adrian Ilie's pass, early in the second half, would surely have produced another if Gheorghe Hagi, having raced past Gary Neville on the right, had not been let down by a poor first touch. Before half-time Ilie had also hit the England bar.

Until Romania scored there was a bounce in England's step. Buoyant after their opening 2-0 victory in Tunisia a week before, they dominated the first 45 minutes with Darren Anderton looking much more like the Anderton of Euro 96.

Ince's departure with what looked like a damaged ankle was a blow that took a while to sink in. Its initial effect was to bring on David Beckham, whose original omission had caused such controversy. For a time Beckham and Anderton promised to form an effective partnership, but once Romania had taken the lead there was a flabbiness about England's midfield.

After a goalless first half, England went behind within two minutes of the restart. There seemed little immediate danger as Romania took a throw-in on the right, but Hagi drifted inside Le Saux with Campbell hesitating. Before Campbell could act, Hagi had lobbed the ball over a sluggish Adams, who turned to see Moldovan striding through to beat Seaman from close range.

The rest was all about elation and relief followed by deflation and disbelief. Now it is not so much a matter of football coming home as England trusting that their stay abroad will not be embarrassingly short-lived. Valderrama may yet have something to say about that.

After the first two rounds of the group competition, Brazil, France, Argentina, Croatia, Nigeria and Romania are guaranteed a berth in the second round. Already out of the tournament are Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, the United States, Jamaica and Tunisia.

Dan Petrescu leaves Graeme Le Saux with head bowed after his impudent winning goal PHOTO: RADU SIGHETI

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Fourth seed Rusedski beats fitness blues

GREG RUSEDSKI has been named No 4 seed for the Wimbledon Championships, which got under way on Monday. The world's fastest server thus becomes the highest seeded British player at Wimbledon since Bobby Wilson — ... fourth — in 1959.

There were serious doubts over Rusedski's fitness after he damaged his left ankle ligaments during the Stella Artois tournament earlier this month. But the British No 1 underwent intensive treatment for his injury and on the eve of the tournament pronounced himself fit for his opening match.

Tim Henman, who like Rusedski was a quarter-finalist last year, is the 12th seed this year, five places above his current ATP ranking. Two players currently in the top 16 have been left out of the seeds' list — Michael Chang of the United States and Spain's Albert Costa, who has failed to progress beyond the second stage in two attempts.

The men's singles seeds are: 1, P Sampras (US); 2, M Rios (Chile); 3, P Korda (Czech); 4, G Rusedski (GB); 5, C Moya (Sp); 6, P Rafter (Aus); 7, Y Kafelnikov (Rus); 8, C Moline (Fr); 9, R Krajicek (Neth); 10, A Corretja (Sp); 11, J Bjorkman (Swe); 12, T Henman (GB); 13, A Agassi (US); 14, G Ivanisevic (Cro); 15, K Kucera (Slovak) and 16, F Mantilla (Sp).

The seeds in the women's section are: 1, M Hingis (Switz); 2, L Davenport (US); 3, J Novotna (Czech); 4, S Graf (Ger); 5, A Sanchez Vicario (Sp); 6, M Seles (US); 7, V Williams (US); 8, C Martinez (Sp); 9, A Coetzer (SA); 10, I Spirlea (Rom); 11, M Pierce (Fr); 13, P Schnyder (Switz); 14, S Testud (Fr); 15, D Van Roost (Bel) and 16, N Tauziat (Fr).

The Russian prodigy, Anna Kournikova, seeded 12, had to pull out because of a thumb injury sustained while beating Steffi Graf during the Direct Line Championships at Eastbourne last week, which was eventually won by Jana Novotna, who beat Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-1, 7-5 in the final.

SUZANNE HORNER claimed her 17th squash title on the WISPA World Tour when she defeated defending champion Lina Charman in the all-England final for the German Open at Aachen. Horner defied temperatures of 32C to fight back from 2-6 down in the fourth game and win 2-9, 9-2, 9-3, 9-7. "It felt like being in a steam bath on that court," she said afterwards. It was Horner's first title since she claimed the Finnish Open last November.

TOP British female boxer Jane Couch, aged 29, became the first woman to be granted a professional licence to fight in the UK by the British Board of Boxing Control after winning a sex discrimination case against the board in March.

LANCASHIRE batsman Andy Flintoff plundered 61 runs from just 24 balls — including 34 in one over from his former England Under-19 team-mate Alex Tudor — as Lancashire romped to a victory target of 250 from 53 overs with almost nine overs to spare against Surrey in the county championship. It was Lancashire's second consecutive win but it failed to dislodge Surrey from the top of the table.

County championship table

	P	W	L	D	Bt	Bw	Pts
Surrey	8	4	2	2	24	26	120
Durham	8	3	3	2	16	31	100
Yorkshire	7	3	2	2	16	26	96
Kent	8	3	2	3	7	27	91
Sussex	7	3	2	2	12	24	90
Lancashire	7	3	1	3	11	22	90
Leicestershire	7	3	0	4	14	16	89
Gloucestershire	7	3	3	1	9	27	87
Worcestershire	7	2	1	4	16	21	81
Middlesex	7	2	2	3	12	18	71
Warwickshire	7	2	4	1	10	26	71
Derbyshire	7	2	4	1	14	21	70
Hampshire	6	2	1	3	7	19	67
Somerset	7	2	4	1	11	19	66
Glamorgan	7	1	3	3	12	26	63
Essex	7	1	3	3	9	20	60
Northants	7	1	0	6	12	14	60
Notts	7	1	4	2	10	26	57

FORMER England and Blackburn Rovers defender Keith Newton has died from cancer at the age of 56. The right back played more than 300 matches for Rovers before moving to Everton in 1969 — winning the league title at Goodison a year later. Newton won 27 England caps and was a member of the 1970 World Cup squad.

Eric Tabarly, the veteran sailor who was the toast of France from the moment he won the Observer Single-Handed Transatlantic Race in 1964 and was considered the greatest deep-sea racing sailor in the world, was reported lost at sea after falling from his 100-year-old yacht, Pen Duick, off the Welsh coast.

Rugby Union First Test: New Zealand 64 England 22

Fury over Grewcock ban

Robert Armstrong in Dunedin

THE England touring party were in a state of shock last Sunday after Danny Grewcock was thrown out of their tour of the southern hemisphere by a judicial committee made up of two New Zealanders and an Australian. The Saracens lock was banned for five weeks after being sent off for allegedly kicking the All Black hooker Anton Oliver on the head during the first Test at Carisbrook.

In sharp contrast Ian Jones, the New Zealand lock, got off scot-free after being cited by the match commissioner for allegedly kicking England's Graham Rowntree on the head. The three-man committee ruled that there was no case to answer. England decided not to lodge an appeal against Grewcock's ban.

To round off a black weekend for England, the coach Clive Woodward returned home to attend the funeral of his father, who died last week.

England's manager Roger Uttley declared that his squad was "distressed and upset" by the "harsh manner" in which Grewcock had been dealt with by the judicial committee when Jones had been let off without even a reprimand. "Nevertheless we are here to play rugby and we must not lose focus on the game," he said.

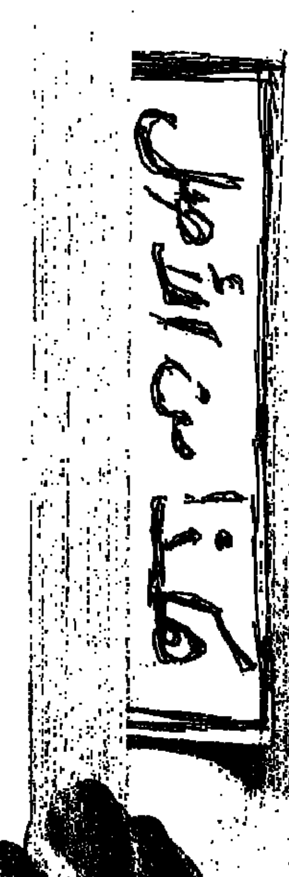
Uttley's pragmatic spirit may help to defuse the explosive war of words that followed a highly physical Test in which New Zealand scored nine tries — against three by England — only after Grewcock was dismissed in the 31st minute. Woodward was justifiably incensed by the bizarre behaviour of the All Blacks' coach John Hart, who spoke to the referee Wayne Erickson of Australia outside his dressing-room at half-time about how best to manage the scrum.

The England coach also accused Erickson of "show-boating and refereeing the game appallingly". The All Blacks persistently stood offside in tandem and joined rucks on the English side, committing penalty offences which the Australian official mostly ignored. The overall penalty count of 20-12 against England made a mockery of the true pattern of play: a better referee than Erickson would very likely have awarded about 18 penalties to each side.

Recriminations on both sides overshadowed a courageous rearguard action by the depleted England team, who could easily have fallen apart under intense All Black pressure and conceded 100 points. Instead England, cleverly marshalled by their captain Matt Dawson and spearheaded up front by Cockerill, Steve Ojomoh and Ben Clarke, maintained coherent shape fore and aft and continued to play constructive football, scoring two excellent tries in the last 10 minutes.

Any hopes salvaged from the Test were quickly buried at Rotorua on Monday when the New Zealand Maoris went on a nine-try rampage to beat the tourists 62-14.

● Beaten and battered, Scotland's squad flew out of Australia after completing their tour with a 33-11 defeat in the second Test at Brisbane, having lost the first 45-3. In Pretoria South Africa thrashed Ireland 33-0 in the second Test, which was punctuated by outbreaks of violence.



An immigrant family arrive at Ellis Island, New York

PHOTO. UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN

Riding the helter-skelter

Clive Sinclair

Shadows on the Hudson
by Isaac Bashevis Singer
translated by Joseph Sherman
Hamish Hamilton 548pp £16.99

RECALLING an earlier exile (commemorated in Psalms) an immigrant poet wrote in his native tongue:

By the rivers of New York I sat down,
I forgot nothing and remembered nothing at all,
And I did not weep.

In place of grief there was only shame. This shame — the legacy of betrayal and survival — infects Shadows On The Hudson like a biblical plague.

Its title is thrice-wise. It could refer to the refugees from Hitler's war (whose story it tells), made insubstantial by fate, mere shadows of their former selves. Or it could allude to their collective past, which casts an indelible shadow over their new lives. Or it may even be an echo of Plato, who dismissed the visible world as the shadow play of a far greater original.

Anyway, the novel is a volcanic howl of rage against the modern world, or the "underworld" as Singer prefers to call it. Were he alive today he would undoubtedly endorse the rabbinical condemnation of Dana International (the transsexual diva from Israel). Certainly Singer abuses his heroines in similar terms, but like the men who frequent his pages, he cannot keep his hands off them.

In fact, the novel provides a paradigm of this attitude. Priapic Hertz Grein, having slept off a night of illicit sex, awakens in a cheap hotel and becomes aware of a young woman in an apartment across the street. "Utterly without shame she wandered about stark naked, as in the days of the Generation of the Flood. First she displayed the front of her body, then the back." Only then does she lower her blind, "with the bearing of an actress". It does not occur to Grein that it might have been more polite to avert his eyes, rather than dismiss her as a strumpet of the *Zeitgeist*.

But it must also be said (and loudly) that without this hypocrisy (or misogyny), without the tension between orthodox Judaism (exemplary, but boring), and modernity (alluring, but damnable) there would have been no *oeuvre*.

Whence the shame? Whence the anger? The immediate cause hardly needs spelling out. Singer arrived in New York in 1935, and was thereby spared (as he put it), "the privilege of going through the Hitler Holocaust". Most of the characters who populate Shadows On The Hudson were not so fortunate. But Singer's *Weltanschauung* predated the experiment in genocide, was there fully formed in his first novel, Satan In Goray, written before he left Poland. It was, in a word, religious. Singer denounced any terrestrial attempt to speed the coming of the Messiah; in his mind, fascism, communism, and zealotry led not to arcadia, but the charnel house. Imagine his horror when the Nazis proved his point. Thereafter he half-believed that, by abandoning the faith of the fathers, he had become a betrayer of Zion, had sided with the murderers. If his fiction is any guide, he never forgave himself. And, oh boy, do his characters suffer for it.

ONE such is Mrs Henrietta Clark (formerly of Bukovina), dentist, mystic, and practitioner of automatic writing (as dictated by her control, Madgie). Since Shadows On The Hudson is Singer's fourth posthumous novel some might suspect that Mrs Clark was now retained by his once and future publishers. Rest assured! Unlike her missives this is the real thing, being taken from the pages of Forverts (ie, the Jewish Daily Forward), where it was serialised in twice-weekly instalments between January 1957 and January 1958.

However, its appearance does leave an important question unanswered. Would Singer have wanted it published? It is well-known that he regarded these monumental accumulations in Forverts as first drafts. The subsequent English translation — edited and redrafted — became the definite edition. The fact that Shadows On The Hudson never underwent this metamorphosis presumably means that Singer deliberately excluded it from the canon. Why? Well, it had always been apparent that Singer was no leftist, but his anti-communism was always guarded. But here, addressing his Yiddish-speaking audience directly, he is revealed as being somewhere to the right of Senator McCarthy. Perhaps that is why he thought it prudent to consign his text to the shadowlands.

In addition to any ethical considerations, there are also artistic matters to consider. Since the author is eternally absent, editing has been (I presume) minimal. As a consequence, the book's architecture is more soap operatic than novelistic. The continual entrances and exits leave it curiously open-ended.

On the other hand, even Singer's first drafts afford enormous pleasure, and Shadows On The Hudson quickly becomes as addictive as any contemporary serial. Will pious but well-heeled Boris Makaver lose all his money, thanks to an ill-judged investment in navy scrap? Or will his voluptuous but estranged daughter Anna step in to save him? Surely she won't be foolish enough to return to her first husband, the actor Yasha Kotik? Or will her passionate affair with the aforementioned Hertz Grein find the telepathic pull of his passionate former mistress, Esther, irresistible? Or will he, perhaps, return to his long-suffering wife, poor, sick Leah? Or will he reject all three and become a born-again Jew? These questions, and many more, alternate with those of a more philosophic bent (for example: "What are we here for?"). Phew! It's like riding the helter-skelter with old Spinoza.

Incidentally, Grein's three-cornered beauty contest (a Jewish variant on the judgment of Paris) is so common in Singer's work as to be a secret signature. Moreover it provides the clue that points the way to a more evolved version of Shadows On The Hudson. During one of their many rows, Esther tells her faithless lover: "Go, and don't ever come back. From now on we're enemies. Blood enemies." There we have it. Just as the dinosaur shrank to become a graceful aviator, so Shadows On The Hudson was reduced until it reappeared years later as a genuine masterpiece, Enemies: A Love Story. It is, as it were, the shadow of a much greater creation.

Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

The Reader, by Bernhard Schlink (Phoenix, £6.99)

THE question every judge should dread — and that means all of us — is "What would you have done?" Schlink, a law professor and novelist, takes the Holocaust as his subject and writes a story in which we find ourselves sympathising with a woman we might think beyond mitigation. A boy falls in love with an older woman and as part of that love he reads aloud to her. We guess that she must be a war criminal. Could literature have saved her? It didn't save her victims. Is Schlink's "evidence", his novel, too tender to the criminal? Does justice know the facts? The reader has to judge.

My Golden Trades, by Ivan Klima (Granta, £6.99)

SIX stories about a banned Czech writer, forced to find work that gives him a great deal to write about. Ah, we may think, more tales of communist oppression. But it doesn't really matter to these stories what regime is in charge. His concern is people, their humour and resourcefulness in the face of a world where "progress" threatens our destruction. Klima's humanity and that of the people his narrator meets, give us hope.

Are You Experienced?, by William Sutcliffe (Penguin, £5.99)

A NEWLY fissile subcontinent will not be pleased to find itself portrayed on a bookmark in this novel as the pubic hair of a naked girl. India here is a finishing school for spoiled, cool "year-offers" clutching the Lonely Planet Guide to India, with easy sex, cheap dope and ashrams on the mind. Sutcliffe is a very funny and witheringly caustic travel companion. His hero gets told that he is on a "poverty-tourism adventure holiday ... going to India isn't an act of rebellion these days, it's actually a form of conformity for middle-class kids who want to be able to put something on their CV that shows a bit of initiative." Ouch.

Mr Clive & Mr Page, by Neil Bartlett (Serpent's Tail, £5.99)

MR CLIVE, who is very posh, meets Mr Page, who isn't. Mr Clive and Mr Page are homosexual, but in the 1920s it was hardly something you shouted about. Mr Clive can escape to the Continent; Mr Page, who always has to be at the bank, who takes the No 29 bus as regularly as if his life depended on it, does not have the freedom that wealth can bring. A vivid portrait of gay men enduring the sadnesses and secrecy inflicted on them by "Englishness".

Pussy with a vengeance

Antonia Logue

Breakfast on Pluto
by Patrick McCabe
Picador 200pp £15.99

CROSS-DRESSING, pop-songs, frocks and politics . . . the stuff of Eurovision dreams? Perhaps, but Israel isn't the only place you can find this heady concoction at the moment as Patrick McCabe's fifth novel amply displays.

Breakfast On Pluto is ostensibly the story of Patrick "Pussy" Braden, the illegitimate son of a parish priest in small-town rural Ireland. From an early age he takes to wearing his sister's clothes and foster mother's lipstick, ending up as a teenage transvestite prostitute in London in the early seventies. The era is important, combining as it does the explosion of violence in Northern Ireland, and, far more importantly to Pussy Braden, the dizzying invasion of glam-rock glitz on the world.

Writing in a camp, high-octane, exclaiming voice, filled with faux-naïveté and telling references to political events, McCabe manages to say more about Northern Ireland's recent history than many historians have been able to. Several key incidents from the particularly savage early seventies are described in chilling, off-hand detail — the loyalist murder of a Downs Syndrome child, the rape and murder of his mother, the shooting of an informer by his classmates, the murder of a Catholic man on his way home from planning his wedding to a Protestant girl . . . all described with the kind of whispered ambivalence that defines the most shocking political apathy.

The use of actual events is employed most effectively late in the novel when Pussy Braden becomes involved in the aftermath of a pub bombing in London, a crime for which the Balcombe Street Four, recently so controversially held up as heroes at Sinn Fein's *Ard Fheis*, were convicted.

Pussy's own story seems to serve mainly as an analysis of identity — he spends the novel obsessed with his parentage, devising a version that allows him to fantasise about revenge for the imagined violation of his mother. Set against Irish small-town life, which no one has yet captured as sharply as McCabe, other characters dip in and out of the narrative grappling with their political and sexual identities as they veer perilously close to victimhood — in particular his childhood friends Irwin Kerr and Charlie Kane, and the teenager Martina Sheridan.

Pussy's voice takes a little getting used to, as did Francie Brady's in his The Butcher Boy. In Breakfast On Pluto, McCabe has not written a novel to outclass that book, but as Joseph Heller said to those who made the same claims about the books that followed Catch-22, who has? If Dana International can come from one of the most politically charged spots in the world thinking only of dresses and pop songs, then so can Pussy Braden. Fortunately politics are not quite so far from her creator's mind in this risky, incisive novel.

...ree to do as we're told

...s Lezard

The Unconscious Civilization
by John Ralston Saul
Penguin ...4pp £7.99pbk

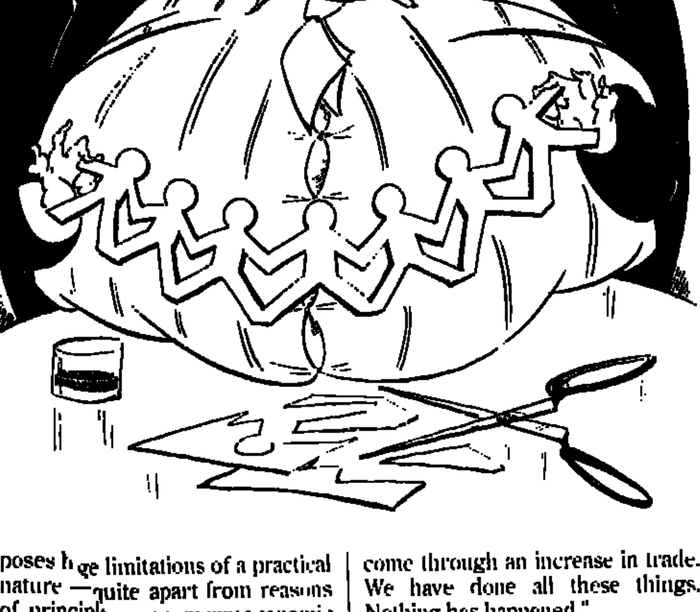
IT'S interesting that while the United Nations has generated a great deal of uncritical hoopla by organising a costly conference about the drugs trade, it does not address the real international problem: poverty. To address the problem, of course, would be to point the finger (as opposed to the begging-bowl) at the wealthy; and that would never do.

Which is why this book is so welcome, and so necessary. Saul begins by rubbing our noses in a few facts. For a start: at a very conservative estimate in 50 million people have been killed by war since 1945; life expectancy in Central Africa is 43 and dropping; Third World debt is $1.5 trillion and rising. (This book was published first in Canada in 1995; so those figures probably need revising. But you get the idea.) Add to this the Western tendency to cut public spending, and then to blame the ensuing shortcomings of the public infrastructure *on the public infrastructure*; the tendency for money to accumulate in the hands of those who already have plenty; and the growth of a consensus that refuses to place any limits, ethical or financial, on the growth of corporate capitalism — and you have a recipe for something that is as bad, in its way, as fascism. Not to mention the number of bone-headed, soulless smug MBAs who bore everyone to death at parties.

To show that Saul has been on the ball for a while, here is a quote from a certain A Blair, given to the Financial Times in 1995: "The determining context of economic policy is the new global market. That imposes huge limitations of a practical nature — quite apart from reasons of principle — on macroeconomic policies." Saul translates: "Mr Blair's statement means two things: One: 'I am in fashion so it's safe to vote for me.' Two: 'The ideology is in charge, so don't worry, I won't be able to do much.'" (And I would add, myself, Three: "You can get more exciting and sonorous English from your Video Recorder's Instruction Manual.")

The argument is roughly summed up thus: "A few decades ago we were told that only if inflation were defeated would growth revive. Subsequently we were told that the key to growth was to cut the fat in business. Then it turned out that the problem was the fat in government. Then salvation was to come through an increase in trade. We have done all these things. Nothing has happened."

This is not a perfect book. It is at times self-contradictory, and not the most exciting read in the history of publishing. Saul does not exactly propose how we can get ourselves out of this mess, except by invoking, with a windiness which I have no doubt will make those in the world's most inaccessible boardrooms void themselves in fear, something about "equilibrium". But it is something to be going on with; or a start. And, as Saul invokes Socrates as saying: the unexamined life is not worth living. This is, at the very least, an aid to self-examination, and, frankly, anyone who chips away at the corporate wall needs a helping hand.



The distant sound of memory

Alexander Chancellor

Remind Me Who I Am, Again
by Linda Grant
Granta Books 301pp £14.99

IT IS told in this book how Frankie Vaughan, the handsome crooner once thought to be England's answer to Frank Sinatra, came to acquire his surname. His real name was Francis Abelson, and he lived as a child with his sister, his mother and his grandmother in a house in Devon Street, Liverpool, next door to Linda Grant's family, the Ginsbergs. His mother would look at him and say in her Yiddish accent: "Frankie, you're number von." "And that's how he came to be known as Vaughan," Grant reports.

This is, I believe, the only funny story in her book, unless you count as amusing the muddles and misstatements of people suffering from senile dementia; unless you find it funny when the author's demented mother, Rose, refers to a church spire as a "tree" because they both "go up", or to a bus as a "clock" because "clocks take you home". But those things aren't in the least funny, really.

The last time I saw my father before he was put in a home in his mid-80s, he was standing in the garden on a hot summer's day securing a pair of blue cotton trousers back-to-front, with the zip running up his behind, and trying to take photographs with the lens of his camera pressed against his eye.

This might have appeared a comic spectacle to a passer-by, but it was deeply depressing to those who knew him. I remonstrated with my mother for letting him make such a humiliating spectacle of himself, and she replied with desperation that she had tried all morning to get him to turn his trousers around, but that he had angrily refused.

He was put into a home against her will, and to all his family's shame, because the anger and paranoia brought on by his dementia often turned him to violence against my mother, who was a great deal frailer than him. If he had stayed at home, he might have killed her, the local doctor said.

Linda Grant's book about her mother's loss of memory (her disease is Multi-Infarct Dementia, not Alzheimer's, though the effect is much the same) is almost unbearably sad to read, for there are few things sadder to witness than a parent's unavailing struggle against mental atrophy. And the sadness is increased in this particular case by Grant's belated yearning to discover more about her tricky, secretive family and their Jewish immigrant forebears at just the moment when her father has died and her mother's memory is going.

This is a beautifully written and rigorously honest book, in which the author does not conceal the strong ambivalence of her own feelings towards her parents.

The implicit lesson of her story is to resist the urge to assuage one's own guilt in dealing with a problem of this kind, but to consider only the patient's interests, however unattractive the consequences may appear.

But all is not necessarily lost. Often some corner of the brain continues to tick away. Rose Grant, a lifelong shopping enthusiast, can still match a jacket and a blouse when she is taken shopping at John Lewis. And last year she laid some flowers in front of a window at Harrods that had been turned into a shrine to Dodi Fayed and Diana, Princess of Wales. "Those poor boys," she said afterwards. "Left without a mother." A pause, and then: "Do you think she'll remarry?"

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £13 contact CultureShop (see page 28)

A black sheep in search of redemption

Sally Brampton

A Patchwork Planet
by Ann Tyler
Chatto & Windus 304pp £15.99

I CAN THINK of no other writer whose novels I look forward to with such gleeful anticipation. A Patchwork Planet is Ann Tyler's fourteenth book, but were it her fortieth, it would not be enough for me.

Arnold Bennett defined the essential characteristic of the really great novelist as "a Christ-like, all-embracing compassion". Ann Tyler has that in spades. No life is too ordinary, no existence too humdrum to be spared her penetrating gaze and gentle humour.

A Patchwork Planet is the story of Barnaby Gaitlin, serial loser. Three weeks off 30 and Barnaby has so far mislaid a wife, a daughter, a reputation and a sense of self-worth.

Now he is in search of his own private angel. Angels are a Gaitlin family tradition. They are, as Barnaby explains, "required". Unlike his prosperous, angel-acquainted family, Barnaby lives in a shabby rented room and works for Rent-a-Back, shifting heavy furniture and running errands for the elderly and the infirm. His only possessions are a beat-up Corvette Sting Ray and a debt of $8,700 owed to his family for money they forked out to pay off his youthful misdemeanours — as his mother never fails to remind him. He is, by his own admission, the black sheep of the family, but a sheep painted, as all black sheep ought to be, in several shades of grey by Tyler's deft hands.

Barnaby has a hard time connecting. He can't connect with his ex-wife Natalie or his nine-year-old daughter Opal, who has never struck him as very appealing. He tries, just as he tries to be good, puzzling all the while as to why other people don't seem to feel that "zingy, thrilling urge to smash the world to bits". He even tries to love his essentially unlovable family. The family get-togethers include some of the most brilliant passages in the novel. Tyler dissects with lethal precision the tensions and undercurrents peculiar to family life, culminating in a Thanksgiving dinner that rolls 800 Christmases into one.

Barnaby's other loose connection is with angels. He finds a potential angel, Sophia, on a train. Her gold hair, feather-print coat and sweet, unflappable nature fit the bill — although the quilted, black nylon boots with white fluff around the tops are a worry. So is her failure to give Barnaby a message, but, as he sees it, it's most likely his own fault as he's probably the first Gaitlin in history who doesn't have a clue what his angel wants to tell him.

Still Barnaby goes on hoping and waiting — humping furniture, driving his elderly customers to the store and fretting when old Mrs Alford starts sorting her belongings, "always a worrisome sign". Tyler is particularly brilliant on old age, refusing the temptation to sentimentalise, never shrinking from its attendant indignities and humiliations or its bad-tempered humour.

It is from a quilt that Mrs Alford is making, "Planet Earth", that the title of the book is drawn. Gradually, Tyler traces Barnaby's erratic, clumsy path to love and redemption — which is not the neat, predictable resolution of romantic fiction but the badly stitched patchwork of which all lives are made up — echoed beautifully in a description of the finished quilt, "makeshift and haphazard, clumsily cobbled together, overlapping and crowded and likely to fall into pieces at any moment".

Barnaby's angel does eventually come through with a message — not with a seraphic fanfare but by sneaking in a quiet revelation. Perhaps there are no angels after all — or angels are lots of people that we never suspect. This book is a delight from beginning to end.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £13 contact CultureShop (see page 28)

Old masters of the sky

Mark Cocker

TO THE north of the city of Caceres we stopped to enjoy the landscape of this arid and sepia-toned region of Spain. A rolling tableland fell away in a succession of distant folds, and across the flank of the nearest tawny slope sheep were grazing quietly without distraction. All would have looked a perfect spring scene except the warm breeze carried towards us an unmistakable odour of decay.

One of the flock had died, but despite the bareness of the hillside we never saw the carcass since it was surrounded by a circular mass of vultures. And each minute that we watched, fresh birds sailed down from the heavens, the wind spilling from their two-metre wings in an audible rush of air. On the ground there was such a seething crowd of bodies that an accurate count was impossible. However, we estimated about 120 birds.

The majority of them were griffon vultures, birds of such aerial mastery that they can cover up to 450 kilometres a day in search of a scene like this one. In surging down on a kill they can reach speeds of 140km/h. Yet as the vultures cruised in to land, their wings were almost completely closed at the moment of touchdown and just a few bouncing steps brought the manoeuvre to a total halt.

It was a consummate performance that couldn't have been more contrasting with the untidy mêlée that ensued. At the periphery of the circle stood scores of "candidates", hungry birds whose aggression may well be triggered by the release of digestive juices.

Once the urge to feed overwhelmed these "candidates" they scrambled and jostled to the centre, where occasionally birds would leap on their rival's back and attack with feet raised and neck extended. But these are largely ritual exchanges that cause little harm to participants, and they ensure a constant rota at the carcass that allows many to take their turn.



ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

The griffon vultures were splendid creatures, but their close relative, the black vulture, was more impressive still. It is the biggest bird of prey in Eurasia. A large female can weigh more than 12kg and has a wingspan of almost three metres. On the ground they look extraordinary. Around the long bare neck is a collar of shaggy feathers that stands up like a courtier's ruff, yet the head itself is pale and bare except for an area of black feathering around each eye. At a distance this looks like two dark hollows scooped out of a naked skull. The whole effect is a kind of ghoulish majesty.

On an African safari, congregations of vultures are almost daily events, but in Europe they are much more special. Since the Middle Ages griffon and especially black vultures have steadily been edged out of many countries — from Germany, Poland, Romania and much of southern France. Spain is now their last great stronghold, where the population of griffons almost doubled to 8,000 pairs by 1990, while Extremadura holds some of the largest concentrations of black vultures found anywhere in the world.

In Europe as a whole their presence defines the continent's last wild places — usually landscapes of vast extent, with few human inhabitants and where the grazing animals (and even the people themselves) seem to live more freely and die sometimes unnoticed.

Vultures mark the parameters of my travel interest in Europe. Their absence, and all it implies, keeps me away from most northern countries and even from the Italian peninsula, with its cultural feast of museums and churches. But I'm seldom deterred. And who would deny that a soaring vulture is one of God's great works of art?

Chess Leonard Barden

AFTER just four seasons Britain's Four Nations Chess League (4NCL) is fast maturing into a serious challenger to its long-established rivals in Germany, France and the Netherlands. Virtually all the UK's leading grandmasters take part.

The 1997-98 champions, for the second year running, were Midland Monarchs, who mix experienced local GMs with some of the brightest young university talent; thus the league provides serious impetus for Britain's chess future.

GMs relish the chance to meet high-quality opposition at leisurely time rates. An innovatory rule requiring at least one woman player per team has also been successful.

There have been some glitches. No Scottish team has yet taken part because of the problems of travel to Birmingham six times a season. Hopes that a sponsor would provide prize money and backing for top teams who qualify for the European Cup have also come to nothing.

In the past season 4NCL and the European Cup have both had their share of controversy. The 4NCL season began without chess sets or boards, a non-playing Austrian captain was sent off in the Eurocup for poking an opponent in the back, and a 2600 GM walked out after a dispute with his manager. Everybody gets heated, but these incidents will make wonderful conversation pieces at chess parties in 10 years' time.

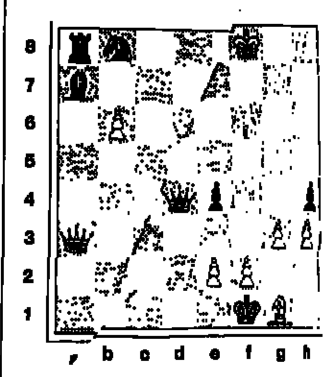
GM Mark Hebden (Midlands) v IM Colin Crouch (Barbican)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 Bf5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 Qb3 Qb6 7 Qxb6 axb6 8 Nc3 *e6* 9 Bb5+ *Nfd7 10* Ne5 Bd6 11 Nxd7 Nxd7 12 Bd2 Kd8 13 0-0 Nf6 14 f3 Bg6 15 Rfc1 Ne8 16 Na4 Bc7 17 Bb4 f5 18 f4 Bh5 19 Rc2 g5 20 fxg5 h6 21 g6 Bxg6 22 Be1 f4 23 Nxb6 Resigns.

GM Mikhail Gurevich (Slough) v Charles Kennaugh (Guildford)

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Bb4 3 Nd5 a5 4 Nf3 e4 5 a3 c6 6 axb4 cxd5 7 Nd4 dxc4 8 d3 Qb6 9 dxc4 Qxb4+ 10 Bd2 Qc5 11 Nb5 Ne7 12 Be3 Qb4+ 13 Qd2 14 Nd6+ Kf8 15 Rxa5 Qxd2+ 16 Kxd2 Nc6 17 Ra4 Ke7 18 c5 Nd8 19 g4 Ke6 20 Bg2 Rb8 21 Rc1 g6 22 f5 23 Rcxb4 Nxb4 24 Rxb4 Rd8 25 Rb6 Ke5 26 Nc4+ Resigns (After Kd5 27 b3 and 28 Rd6 mate.)

No 2529



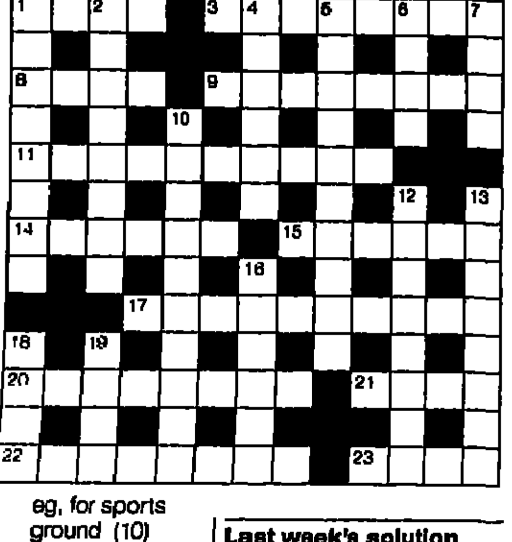
Helpmate in two moves, with four solutions, by C J Feather, said the caption in the March issue of The Problemist. With 10 minutes to spare and knowing that Chris Feather is the UK's leading helpmate composer, I decided to improve my lateral thinking and find at least one answer.

In helpmates, Black moves first, then both sides combine to allow White to checkmate on his second turn. So two black moves and two white needed, but in reverse order from normal problems. Let's try black playing hxg3, g2 and Qd1 while White plays Qb3 and Qxc mate. Bother, that's three black moves. So can we work 1 (black move) Qe3 2 fxe3 followed by mating with the WQ at f2? *No, it takes* far too many moves.

After nearly half an hour and missing my train, I stumbled on one of the four solutions and eventually worked out the other three answers. They're easy once you get the hang of it, but if you are an over-the-board player you do need lateral thinking.

No 2528: 1 Nh6!! a2 (if Rxh6 2 a8Q) 2 Rg7+ and Black's king can never escape from checks on the g file.

Quick crossword no. 424



Across

1 Swelling — collision (4)
3 Goods and chattels (8)
8 Twilight (4)
9 Tacit (8)
11 Sewing (10)
14 Liquid measure (6)
15 All for (anag) (6)
17 Type of knot (5,5)
20 Person who goes to law (8)
21 Blackleg (4)
22 Roost for Christmas partridge? (4,4)
23 Stain (on landscape?) (4)

Down

1 Raillery (8)
2 Showing skill and control (8)
4 Fame (6)
5 Oil rig that met disaster (5,5)
6 Roué (4)
7 American (4)
10 Illumination eg, for sports ground (10)
12 Decisive or disapproving (8)
13 Letters of a language (8)
16 Tree-lined road (6)
18 Mistake (4)
19 Volcano (4)

Last week's solution

SICKASAPARROT
W O B L G E O
INN SILVERFOX
N V E U D U T
GREENERY TRUE
R T E D B T
HOSTEL MUNICH
A A E P M S
LAZY LAMBCHOP
I I S T S M O
BLOWTORCH ELK
U N U O O N E
TREADINGWATER

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE charismatic Dutch player Bob Slavenburg was larger than life in every sense. Six and a half feet tall, he could perform tricks at the table that Ronaldo would love to emulate on the football pitch for Brazil. In a World Championship, he once *made a contract* of two spades doubled when his opponents were cold for a grand slam — in spades! I'll show you that hand soon.

Today, we'll look at a deal that Slavenburg played in the 1967 Sunday Times tournament — now the Macallan.

Love all, dealer West:

North
♠ K74
♥ KJ73
♦ KQ84
♣ 104

West
♠ Q962
♥ 84
♦ AJ72
♣ Q63

East
♠ AJ853
♥ None
♦ 10953
♣ K852

South
♠ 10
♥ AQ109652
♦ 6
♣ AJ97

This was the bidding:

South	West	North	East
Slavenburg		Kreijns	
	Pass	Pass	1♠
2♥	2♠	4♥	4♠
5♥	Double	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Note Slavenburg's calculated underbid of 2♥ — a lesser player would have bid 4♥, then not known what to do when 4♠ was passed back to him. As a result South's wild distribution was concealed from the opponents.

West led the two of spades. Slavenburg, who did not want a club switch from East, went up with dummy's king to make a spade continuation easy for the defenders. East won the ace of spades and returned the suit, Slavenburg ruffing. He led his singleton diamond towards the dummy, but West was awake and went in with his ace of diamonds. Ruffing the third round of spades, Slavenburg ran all his trumps! That's right — he did not cash the king and queen of diamonds in dummy, because he could discard only two of his club losers, and would have one left at the finish. Instead, he cashed the heart suit, forcing the opponents to discard. This was the end position before the last trump was played:

North
♠ None
♥ None
♦ KQ8
♣ 104

West
♠ None
♥ None
♦ J72
♣ Q6

East
♠ None
♥ None
♦ 1095
♣ K8

South
♠ None
♥ 2
♦ None
♣ AJ97

Pity poor East and West. Both, convinced that Slavenburg must have another diamond, clung grimly to their three remaining cards in that suit. This meant, of course, each of them discarded a club, coming down to a single honour in that suit. So Slavenburg made not one diamond trick — but his ♣AJ97 took the last four tricks to bring home the doubled game.

Football World Cup: Romania 2 England 1

England lose to last-gasp strike

David Lacey in Toulouse

SUDDENLY England look vulnerable. Monday night's 2-1 defeat by Romania in the Municipal Stadium here has not in itself dealt a mortal blow to the chances of Glenn Hoddle's team reaching the knock-out stage of the World Cup, but the manner of it posed serious questions about their ability to progress further.

England still only need to draw with Colombia in Lens on Friday to reach the second round on goal difference, a task that should not be beyond them, although on this week's evidence in Montpellier the 36-year-old Carlos Valderrama still has the ability to destroy opponents with an inspired pass. The most significant aspect of Monday night's result is that Romania, whose last match in the first round is with Tunisia, look like heading Group G.

Should that happen, England would probably find themselves playing Argentina, the likely winners of Group H, in St Etienne on June 30 for a place in the quarter-finals. That would be bad news for Hoddle's players, who showed their lack of World Cup experience against Romania with the defence at fault on both goals.

From an English point of view the result was cruel. Having lost the injured Paul Ince before half-time they fell behind to a goal from Viorel Moldovan immediately after. Then Michael Owen, having replaced the labouring Teddy Sheringham, responded to his cue by bringing the score level seven minutes from the end amid goalmouth confusion caused by Alan Shearer's hard-driven low cross.

A draw had been widely predicted — indeed the last four meetings between England and Romania had been drawn — and a point each would have left both teams reasonably satisfied. But as the match moved into stoppage time a pass from Dorinel Munteanu sent in Dan Petrescu from the left.

Graeme Le Saux, his Chelsea team-mate, came across to make a challenge more clumsy than effective, and Petrescu managed to slip the winning goal through Seaman's legs as the England goalkeeper fell backwards. In a sadistic final twist there was still time for Owen to hit a post as England sought salvation.

Hoddle has persevered with playing three at the back. Holding Italy in a goalless game in Rome seemed the ultimate vindication of the England coach's move away from 4-4-2. Now doubt will arise about his formation, especially given the increasing number of times Romania found space down the flanks.

While you could not argue with Hoddle's assertion that "two sloppy goals were given away", Adrian Ilie's pass, early in the second half, would surely have produced another if Gheorghe Hagi, having raced past Gary Neville on the right, had not been let down by a poor first touch. Before half-time Ilie had also hit the England bar.

Until Romania scored there was a bounce in England's step. Buoyant after their opening 2-0 victory in Tunisia a week before, they dominated the first 45 minutes with Darren Anderton looking much more like the Anderton of Euro 96.

Ince's departure with what looked like a damaged ankle was a blow that took a while to sink in. Its initial effect was to bring on David Beckham, whose original omission had caused such controversy. For a time Beckham and Anderton promised to form an effective partnership, but once Romania had taken the lead there was a flabbiness about England's midfield .

After a goalless first half, England went behind within two minutes of the restart. There seemed little immediate danger as Romania took a throw-in on the right, but Hagi drifted inside Le Saux with Campbell hesitating. Before Campbell could act, Hagi had lobbed the ball over a sluggish Adams, who turned to see Moldovan striding through to beat Seaman from close range.

The rest was all about elation and relief followed by deflation and disbelief. Now it is not so much a matter of football coming home as England trusting that their stay abroad will not be embarrassingly short-lived. Valderrama may yet have something to say about that.

Dan Petrescu leaves Graeme Le Saux with bead bowed after his impudent winning goal PHOTO: RADU SIGHETI

After the first two rounds of the group competition, Brazil, France, Argentina, Croatia, Nigeria and Romania are guaranteed a berth in the second round. Already out of the tournament are Saudi Arabia, Japan, South Korea, the United States, Jamaica and Tunisia.

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Fourth seed Rusedski beats fitness blues

GREG RUSEDSKI has been named No 4 seed for the Wimbledon Championships, which got under way on Monday. The world's fastest server thus becomes the highest seeded British player at Wimbledon since Bobby Wilson — fourth — in 1959.

There were serious doubts over Rusedski's fitness after he damaged his left ankle ligaments during the Stella Artois tournament earlier this month. But the British No 1 underwent intensive treatment for his injury and on the eve of the tournament pronounced himself fit for his opening match.

Tim Henman, who like Rusedski was a quarter-finalist last year, is the 12th seed this year, five places above his current ATP ranking. Two players currently in the top 16 have been left out of the seeds' list — Michael Chang of the United States and Spain's Albert Costa, who has failed to progress beyond the second stage in two attempts.

The men's singles seeds are: 1, P Sampras (US); 2, M Rios (Chile); 3, P Korda (Czech); 4, G Rusedski (GB); 5, C Moya (Sp); 6, P Rafter (Aus); 7, Y Kafelnikov (Rus); 8, C Pioline (Fr); 9, R Krajicek (Neth); 10, A Corretja (Sp); 11, J Bjorkman (Swe); 12, T Henman (GB); 13, A Agassi (US); 14, G Ivanisevic (Cro); 15, K Kucera (Slovak) and 16, F Mantilla (Sp).

The seeds in the women's section are: 1, M Hingis (Switz); 2, L Davenport (US); 3, J Novotna (Czech); 4, S Graf (Ger); 5, A Sanchez Vicario (Sp); 6, M Seles (US); 7, V Williams (US); 8, C Martinez (Sp); 9, A Coetzer (SA); 10, I Spirlea (Rom); 11, M Pierce (Fr); 13, P Schnyder (Switz); 14, S Testud (Fr); 15, D Van Roost (Bel) and 16, N Tauziat (Fr).

The Russian prodigy, Anna Kournikova, seeded 12, had to pull out because of a thumb injury sustained while beating Steffi Graf during the Direct Line Championships at Eastbourne last week, which was eventually won by Jana Novotna, who beat Arantxa Sanchez Vicario 6-1, 7-5 in the final.

SUZANNE HORNER claimed her 17th squash title on the WISPA World Tour when she defeated defending champion Lina Charman in the all-England final for the German Open at Aachen. Horner defied temperatures of 32C to fight back from 2-6 down in the fourth game and win 2-9, 9-2, 9-3, 9-7. "It felt like being in a steam bath on that court," she said afterwards. It was Horner's first title since she claimed the Finnish Open last November.

TOP British female boxer Jane Couch, aged 29, became the first woman to be granted a professional licence to fight in the UK by the British Board of Boxing Control after winning a sex discrimination case against the board in March.

LANCASHIRE batsman Andy Flintoff plundered 61 runs from just 24 balls — including 34 in one over from his former England Under-19 team-mate Alex Tudor — as Lancashire romped to a victory target of 250 from 53 overs with almost nine overs to spare against Surrey in the county championship. It was Lancashire's second consecutive win but it failed to dislodge Surrey from the top of the table.

County championship table

	P	W	L	D	Bt	Bw	Pts
Surrey	8	4	2	2	24	26	120
Durham	8	3	3	2	16	31	100
Yorkshire	7	3	2	2	16	26	95
Kent	8	3	2	3	7	27	91
Sussex	7	3	2	2	12	24	90
Lancashire	7	3	1	3	11	22	90
Leicestershire	7	3	0	4	14	15	89
Gloucestershire	7	3	3	1	9	27	87
Worcestershire	7	2	1	4	16	21	81
Middlesex	7	2	2	3	12	18	71
Warwickshire	7	2	4	1	10	26	71
Derbyshire	7	2	4	1	14	21	70
Hampshire	6	2	1	3	7	19	67
Somerset	7	2	4	1	11	19	65
Glamorgan	7	1	3	3	12	26	63
Essex	7	1	3	3	9	26	60
Northants	7	1	0	6	12	14	60
Notts	7	1	4	2	10	25	57

FORMER England and Blackburn Rovers defender Keith Newton has died from cancer at the age of 56. The right back played more than 300 matches for Rovers before moving to Everton in 1969 — winning the league title at Goodison a year later. Newton won 27 England caps and was a member of the 1970 World Cup squad.

Eric Tabarly, the veteran sailor who was the toast of France from the moment he won the Observer Single-Handed Transatlantic Race in 1964 and was considered the greatest deep-sea racing sailor in the world, was reported lost at sea after falling from his 100-year-old yacht, Pen Duick, off the Welsh coast.

Rugby Union First Test: New Zealand 64 England 22

Fury over Grewcock ban

Robert Armstrong in Dunedin

THE England touring party were in a state of shock last Sunday after Danny Grewcock was thrown out of their tour of the southern hemisphere by a judicial committee made up of two New Zealanders and an Australian. The Saracens lock was banned for five weeks after being sent off for allegedly kicking the All Black hooker Anton Oliver on the head during the first Test at Carisbrook.

In sharp contrast Ian Jones, the New Zealand lock, got off scot-free after being cited by the match commissioner for allegedly kicking England's Graham Rowntree on the head. The three-man committee ruled that there was no case to answer. England decided not to lodge an appeal against Grewcock's ban.

To round off a black weekend for England, the coach Clive Woodward returned home to attend the funeral of his father, who died last week.

England's manager Roger Uttley declared that his squad was "distressed and upset" by the "harsh manner" in which Grewcock had been dealt with by the judicial committee when Jones had been let off without even a reprimand. "Nevertheless we are here to play rugby and we must not lose focus on the game," he said.

Uttley's pragmatic spirit may help to defuse the explosive war of words that followed a highly physical Test in which New Zealand scored nine tries — against three by England — only after Grewcock was dismissed in the 31st minute. Woodward was justifiably incensed by the bizarre behaviour of the All Blacks' coach John Hart, who spoke to the referee Wayne Erickson of Australia outside his dressing-room at half-time about how best to manage the scrum.

The England coach also accused Erickson of "show-boating and refereeing the game appallingly". The All Blacks persistently stood offside in tandem and joined rucks on the English side, committing penalty offences which the Australian official mostly ignored. The overall penalty count of 20-12 against England made a mockery of the true pattern of play: a better referee than Erickson would very likely have awarded about 18 penalties to each side.

Recriminations on both sides overshadowed a courageous rearguard action by the depleted England team, who could easily have fallen apart under intense All Black pressure and conceded 100 points. Instead England, cleverly marshalled by their captain Matt Dawson and spearheaded up front by Cockerill, Steve Ojomoh and Ben Clarke, maintained coherent shape fore and aft and continued to play constructive football, scoring two excellent tries in the last 10 minutes.

Any hopes salvaged from the Test were quickly buried at Rotorua on Monday when the New Zealand Maoris went on a nine-try rampage to beat the tourists 62-14.

● Beaten and battered, Scotland's squad flew out of Australia after completing their tour with a 33-11 defeat in the second Test at Brisbane, having lost the first 45-3. In Pretoria South Africa thrashed Ireland 33-0 in the second Test, which was punctuated by outbreaks of violence.

